MEN AND THE KINGDOM

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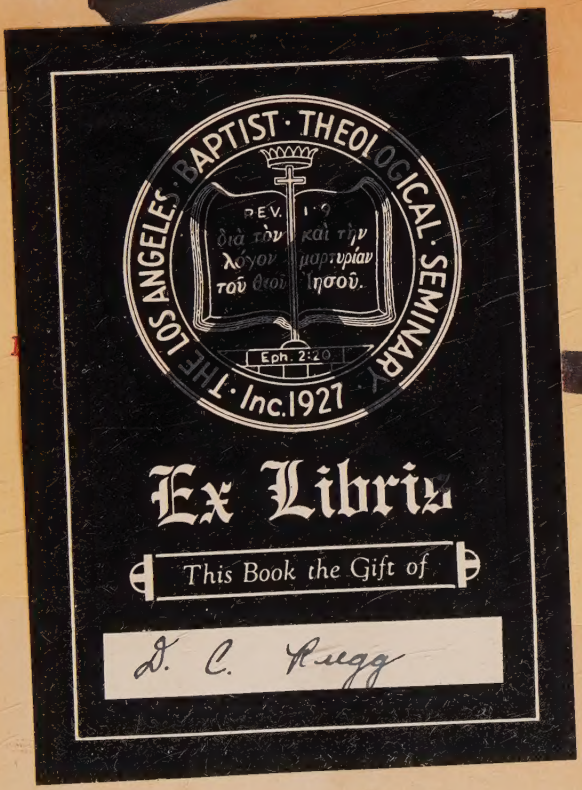
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Men and the Kingdom

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Men and the Kingdom

By

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Author of

"Evangelism in the Pew"

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TO

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND

WHO SHARES ALL MY VISIONS

AND CHEERS ALL MY LABOURS

MY WIFE

FOREWORD

In trusting this little volume to the mercies of the Christian brotherhood I am profoundly conscious that there may be in my boldness an element of presumption. However, the motive may justify the presumption.

The author has rejoiced for years in a congregation in which the men have uniformly constituted from forty to fifty per cent. of the total attendance. The message of this volume is the heart of the message which has found a generous response in the lives of this noble company of men. It is the message which has moved them to clean living, heroic giving, and a fine sacrificial service for God and man. Since the value of any message must lie in the fruit it produces, the men of my church and congregation are my vindication for this effort to give their message to all men of the larger Christian brotherhood.

The apprehension of the highest spiritual principles of the Kingdom of God never fails of a practical moral fruitage. Men respond most readily to those spiritual demands that

are most heroic. They are generally ready for any call for service if re-enforced by an adequate inspiration. The great men of the Bible were men whose lives were lived under the constraint of a heavenly vision. What was true then will be true now. Give men real knowledge of spiritual realities and their daily lives will be characterized by high thinking and holy living.

This book is being sent forth at a time when the Church is proposing a vision and a programme worthy of the best manhood of its constituency. The Men of the Kingdom are being seriously challenged to rescue the Church from any rightful charge of effeminacy or incompetency. They are being seriously organized and equipped for a campaign of world-wide conquest in the name and under the banner of our King. It is the earnest prayer of the author that " Men and the Kingdom " may have some place in that organization and in the equipment for this service.

J. C. M.

CONTENTS

I.	The Kingdom of Heaven . .	11
II.	The Kingdom with Power . .	26
III.	The Approach to the Kingdom	41
IV.	Men of the Inner Circle . .	62
V.	Men and Influence . . .	80
VI.	Men and Ambition . . .	95
VII.	Men and the Great Debt . .	107
VIII.	Men and the King's Tribute .	119
IX.	Men and the Forgotten Book .	132
X.	The Glory of the Commonplace	143

I

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

ON the mount of the Sermon, Jesus looked out upon the multitude of men who were to Him the whole world in miniature. There were in the hearts of that group all the embryonic struggles and hopes, heart-aches, and sins of the whole race of men. Under the inspiration of the manifest need and challenge of the multitude, Jesus turns aside to teach to a group of young men the fundamental and eternal principles of the Kingdom of Heaven. These disciples of the present are to be leaders of the future. They are sitting at His feet in life's school of preparation. They are with Him facing life's trials, problems, conflicts—preparation behind, experience before. Now preparation is vision; experience is realization. The visions of life's to-day are the to-day's prophecy of the realities of life's to-morrow.

For every man, all life depends upon three things: the realm in which one lives—physical, psychical, spiritual; the ideal toward which one labours; and the spirit which one incar-

nates. One may pitch his life entirely within the realm of the physical and live for present ease and comfort, making appetite his god, self-indulgence his law. One may revel in the joys of the intellectual, make mind his master, and intellectual pursuits and problems his life. And one may rise to the higher realm of the spiritual and in communion with the Eternal and the Divine may say whether his life is to involve the physical and the psychical in the higher law of consummate fellowship with God. If that be one's ideal, if he bring all the forces and factors of life toward that one supreme purpose, if he engage all his energies and activities in seeking to establish himself in that life and produce that life in himself, then has he set his feet in the path toward the highest. Whatever spirit is incarnated in the life will determine alike life's course and life's destiny. Jesus seems to say or to imply all this in the marvellous teachings that flow in such strange new sentences from His lips upon the amazed ears of the group of Galilean young men who acknowledged Him Teacher and obeyed Him as Lord.

Thus He is ever making appeal to the souls of men for the Kingdom of Heaven. The world needs to hear that appeal; not alone the appeal of the Kingdom of Heaven, but Christ's appeal for that Kingdom. The word of Jesus was ever "the Kingdom of Heaven is at

hand." "The Kingdom of Heaven has come beforehand by anticipation to you." He did not preach the Kingdom of God in Heaven. That were an anachronism. That were already a spiritual tautology. One needs neither to preach nor to pray for the Kingdom of Heaven there. It is established there and has been in unbroken power and felicity through all the centuries and ages from the beginning. One needs not to pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God in the future. That, too, is an assured fact.

"God's purposes are ripening fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower,
Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His works in vain,
But God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain."

The appeal of Christ concerning the Kingdom of God is of the kingdom in the earth. He taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come in earth as in Heaven," and He contemplates nothing less than the complete enthronement of God in all the domestic, social, commercial, and political life of all men. This Sermon of the Mount is His proposed programme for the establishment of this Kingdom of God on the earth.

The law of this Kingdom as set forth by Him in His great inaugural address demands

the recognition of three eternal, basic principles. If the throne of God is to be established among men, it can only be accomplished by recognition of, and incorporation of these principles.

The throne of God in the earth is to be in the hearts of men, and is to be built upon a foundation of personal spiritual righteousness.

Come to Jesus on the Mount, and you have approached the perfect holiness of God. It is the Mount of light, and not of light only, but the dazzling glory whiteness of the infinite perfection of light. The sovereignty of God is there, for the essential consideration of that great Sermon is the Kingdom of God, but the sovereignty considered is established and to be established not by the scourge of omnipotent authority, but by the symphonizing of the human life with the divine life. As a piano is toned up to the concert pitch of a pipe organ in order to harmonize in sound, so Christ's first work in the Kingdom of God is to tone up the human to the pitch of the divine spirit life. Like the pendulums of two great clocks, with the same rhythmic swing, keyed to the same pitch, swinging in perfect unison, so the will of man, under the touch of the divine spirit, becomes rhythmic with the Spirit of God, and moves and feels and thinks and acts in harmony with Him.

The basic principle of the Kingdom of God is not institutionalism, ceremonialism, nor ecclesiasticism—not church nor ritual, nor theology, but the life of the individual man made to be in harmony with the life of God. A later word of Jesus was, "The reign of God is within you"; not "about you," nor "in the midst of you," but "within." Thus, out of the heart of man will continue to proceed the issues of life, and from within man will come forth those streams of living water of which Jesus spoke on the last great day of the feast and which John interprets as meaning the Spirit whom they should receive who believed on Him.

There is an ancient illustration of all this in the case of Enoch, who walked with God, and of Noah, who walked with God; each in his day and generation going in God's direction, keeping step with the Divine Friend, neither outrunning Him nor lagging behind Him, living upon the same spiritual plane, and holding that converse which is at once the finest interpretation and the highest privilege of fellowship with God.

The boast of Jesus toward the close of His earthly career was this: "The Devil comes and has nothing in Me." "I delight to do thy will, O God." And even a casual consideration of His life will indicate that His boast was not without foundation. The devil as-

sailed Him at every possible point of contact, enticed, drove, sought constantly to ensnare Him that he might bring his own power into possession of that matchless Man; and yet when the struggle and conflict was ended and Jesus had finished His course, walking as a man among men, subject to all their passions, and tempted in all respects like as we are, it was still true that the devil had in Him neither place nor precedent nor power.

What His life was, He designs that all life shall be, for it is still true that without holiness shall no man see God. The foundation of God's throne is righteousness. The uniform of His Kingdom is fine white linen, whiter than any fuller can whiten, which is the righteous acts of the saints. We ask, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" The Book of Books answers, "By taking heed thereto according to God's Law."

There is a most illuminating comparison between the finality of despair in Genesis 6:3 and the finality of hope in Romans 8:3. Read from the margin of the Revised Version in Genesis 6:3: "My Spirit shall not always rule in man, for in his going astray he is also flesh." The sons of God (the line of Seth) had married the daughters of men (the line of Cain) and these godless daughters of a godless race, coming out of the midst of a godless civilization, bringing their godless

ideals and arts and standards, had gradually changed the whole spiritual atmosphere which belonged to the untainted homes of the sons of God. Godless wives did not inspire the godliest of men to faith, prayer, and purity. At the knees of godless mothers, no infant lips were taught to lisp their petitions heavenward, and everywhere the best ideals which the mothers and the wives of that generation could give were yet of the earth, earthy. The whole life became carnal. Sordid with self, self-interests, self-seeking, self-comfort, self-worship, produced an utter absence of self-control. Self was king, and those who lived in that day lived in the kingdom of self and under the dominion of self. And as self rose above the threshold of consciousness, as self asserted itself in the lives of men, as men became subservient to their own purposes, passions, and powers, and came to exercise and recognize dependence upon their own powers, plans, and pursuits, God was crowded out and down beneath the threshold of consciousness. One can almost catch the despairing note of spiritual hopelessness in the interpretation of that passage, "My Spirit shall not always rule in man, in that in his going astray he also is flesh." The carnal is on the throne and the Spirit of God is dispossessed of His Kingdom, and can only regain it, when some man shall come the law of whose life shall

not be the law of self, and the glory of whose self shall be the surrender of self to the sovereignty of the Spirit.

Over against this now lay those matchless words of deathless hope. Rom. 8:3 R. V.: "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the flesh, slew sin in the flesh." Here, then, is One who for Himself and for us all, laid hands upon this tyrant who had so long lorded over human life, pulled him down from his throne, put upon him the chains of bondage, and brought him into subjection to the sweet will of God. Consciously, definitely, constantly, everywhere, and under all the circumstances of His human life, He re-enthroned the Spirit of God and within Himself made manifest the Kingdom of God as established upon a throne of eternal spiritual righteousness. Thus He made to us an example of what ought to be done in all life and what may be done by all life.

Men of Divine Relationships

Men of the Kingdom find their inspiration and their dynamics in their relation to God. The promise of one of the Beatitudes is that certain men shall be called sons of God, and of another is that they shall see God. The highest inspiration to righteousness is the hope

of sonship and the belief in a vision of God.

There is much to edify in the amazing statement of II Chronicles 26:5: "And Uzziah set his heart to seek the Lord all the days of Zechariah, who gave instruction in the seeing of God." Or in that more marvellous experience of the young court preacher of the later days of Uzziah. Isaiah 6:1. He tells his own story: "In the year that Uzziah died, I saw the King, high and lifted up, upon a throne, and His glory filled the earth as a train, and I cried, Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand which he had taken in the tongs from off the altar, and he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin cleansed. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me."

In each case, as perhaps in all other cases of human experience, a vision of God and of men's relation to Him, worked a transforming change and added to the life purpose, power, dignity. So much have men through all the ages been moved by a conscious perception of God that often and often the whole

Christian scheme has been assailed by the unbeliever as visionary and unreal. The men of the Kingdom, while not visionaries, are yet men of visions, and the most real and compelling factors in their lives are the visions which they have and the visions which the records of inspired Scriptures have brought down to us out of the lives and experiences of other men. In explaining his great vision to King Agrippa, the Apostle Paul tells the story of his before Damascus Gate experience, and concludes his remarkable recital with the all-sufficient reason for his life as he had lived it, "O King, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

We may again assert, then, that the highest inspiration of righteousness is a vision of God. But not more true is that than that the most constant source of spiritual strength is consciousness of a divine sonship. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God, and such we are. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself even as He is pure." Here, then, is the despair of men: holiness born out of a vision unfailing of God and a realizable kinship with the Divine. How can these things be had? It is often

said that the Sermon on the Mount is a moral plateau with no steps of ascent. Change the figure, and let us say the whole Gospel flower is here, not flowered yet, but in bud, to be uncalyxed. As each succeeding development of life within proceeds, the calyxes will fall away and the heart of the Gospel flower will open to the world its beauty and its fragrance.

No cross in this Sermon? No, but Jesus is there, and Jesus is the dispensational agent of the Kingdom's accomplishment; and Jesus is the man of the virgin birth, of the sinless life, of the vicarious death, of the triumphant resurrection, of the glorious ascension, of the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit, and of the promised coming again of the Lord in Glory. And since Jesus is there, all, all the Gospel is there, and man may, if he will, find there life and love and liberty, for He closed the gap between God and man.

The Holy Spirit acts upon the souls of men and upon the Word of God, too, as fire upon malleable material. It is said that when a famous bridge over a great river was being completed, the rails were laid simultaneously from the opposite banks of the river to meet in mid-air, halfway from bank to bank. The last rails were laid in the middle forenoon of a summer day. When they were put in place, to the consternation of the force in charge, they failed to meet by some six inches. The

civil engineer who had planned the construction of the bridge was at his city home, one hundred miles away. The builder in charge immediately sent a telegram to the engineer, announcing the failure of the rails to meet. In response, a message was received which simply said, "Wait until one o'clock." Since there was nothing else to do, they waited. But, while they waited, the sun climbed its way up the ladder of heaven, and sending down its ray, radiated heat in every direction. Heat entered into the earth; it entered into the air; it entered into the steel. Gradually and most amazingly, a transformation took place. Those steel rails expanded under the influence of the heat, and so lengthened themselves that when one o'clock came they had come together and were as one. Now swiftly the steel bolts were spiked in and the great rails bound together, so that the bridge was now completed. Heavy locomotives, with their trains of freight, moved out across the bridge in safety and the traffic of a nation found a new highway.

Now, Jesus Christ is as the power of the sun, both to men and the Word of God. Under the expansive power of His indwelling life, the gap which had hopelessly separated man and the Law, is filled up. So what the Law of God could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God accomplished through Jesus Christ. For sending His Son in the

likeness of the flesh, He slew sin in the flesh. This means that the Spirit of God entering both into the life of man and into the truth, brings them together under the inspiration of Christ's life and ministry, thus making a blessed union between God and man. The Divine Spirit entering into the heart of man, and dwelling there, binds together God and man, separated before the entrance of the Spirit of Christ.

Now, man, who could not reach God because he was carnal, and God who could not reach man through His only instrument, the law, since the law was weak through the flesh, find a common meeting place in Jesus Christ. For when Christ came and fulfilled the law Himself, He bridged the chasm of separation and made the two one for evermore.

Men of Human Relationships

These men whom Jesus had inducted into this new life and relation to God, men in whose hearts is the throne of God and whose lives are lives of divine relationships, are yet to be men of human relationships and their relations are to be of the most vital sort. "Ye are the salt of the earth"; "Ye are the light of the world";—salt the aseptic, preserving; light, inherently self-communicating. Thus preserving by the inherent purity of His life

in man and communicating the inherently self-communicable power of His life to men, He proposes the regeneration of human society and of all human institutions by the coming in of the Kingdom of God.

God is to rule in man, the individual, and man is to rule once again for God in the earth. Thus by His re-enthronement in the hearts of men, God is to reign in the earth through men in society, in business, in politics. All earth's standards will be henceforth measured by the divine yardstick; all earth's problems will henceforth find their solution in the divine presence; all earth's discords will vanish in the harmony of the divine fellowship.

"One ship drives east, and another west,
By the self-same winds that blow,
It's the set of the sails, and not the gales,
That tell us the way they go.

"As are the ways of ships, so are the ways of fate,
As we journey along through life,
It's the set of the soul, that decides the goal,
And not the journey or the strife."

Catch this new vision of the Kingdom of God, a vision of the present ruling of God in the life so as to transform the life within itself and to translate the life into a new meaning and a new power in human society.

There can be no appeal of the Kingdom equal to this appeal to the hearts of thinking men and women. It is a call to nothing less

than a divine partnership in the regeneration of a world and the re-establishment of the divine throne in the midst of the world.

Mr. F. L. Brown, of New York, told me some years ago, just after his return from Japan, that, speaking in a girls' school, he had urged them to come into the Kingdom themselves that they might aid in bringing the Kingdom to others. After his appeal sixty young women came to him and said, "We have not before so understood the Gospel message. If it is a call for service in an effort to restore God to His lost throne in the world, we will come in now that we may have an opportunity in that great task."

Catch a new vision for yourself. A new heaven open to men made fit for residence therein, and a new earth open to God and made fit for His residence there.

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II

THE KINGDOM WITH POWER

"And He said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, There are some of them here that stand by that shall in no wise taste of death until they see the Kingdom of God with power."—MARK 9 : 1.

THIS text has an immediate historical application, and also a future prophetic application. The immediate application is personal, the prophetic significance is social. One is led to believe that a careful study of Christ's utterances on the Kingdom will indicate the fact that all of those utterances have both a personal and a social application. The personal or individual application is the process of the realization of the social accomplishment of the Kingdom. The acceptance of the Kingdom truth by the individual, its translation into his life, and his transformation by its power are in themselves the process not only by which the individual is regenerated and made entirely a new creature, but they are the process of the social or universal realization of the Kingdom of God in the earth.

The Kingdom Divine

The Kingdom of God, in the mind of Jesus, is the rule of God; His rule in the individual human being, and His rule in the body of humanity. There is the idea of personal relationship and the conception of social relationship. Man is to be subject to His dominion, and God is to have His throne in the heart of the individual, and, from that citadel of his affections and his volitions, is to rule and possess and direct all the energies and activities of his individual life. What is true, however, of the individual is equally true of that social body in which the individual is a unit, and of which he is an integral part. Through the individual, indeed, God is to have His throne in the midst of humanity. Consciously or unconsciously to them, in a sovereign way, He is to direct the destinies of men in communities, in races, nations, and ultimately is, through the Gospel message and the Gospel men, to bring all the kingdoms of this earth with their glory and honour and power and dominion into the Kingdom of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words quoted in this text from the lips of Jesus by Mark are confessedly difficult of interpretation. One perhaps may not speak dogmatically in interpreting, and what is here suggested is simply one's personal conviction,

unsupported by any authority save the authority of that conviction born of much study and prayer. What Christ seems to mean, then, is that He has been declaring the Kingdom of God come among men, but so far the proclamation of that Kingdom is a theory, His theory indeed, but a theory nevertheless. Men have questioned, have been taught, have cavilled, but few have accepted the astounding revelations which He declared Himself to be the bearer of. His theory of the Kingdom has received no practical demonstration anywhere in the world save through certain miracles and wonder-working powers resident in Himself and through the spotless life which He bore among men. Now, Jesus challenges the men who were His contemporaries by saying, "My gospel is not to remain a theory. Some of you who are here are going to live to see the Kingdom, not simply proclaimed as a theory, but the Kingdom come with power." A test is to be made of His preaching that God may rule in the individual life and in the life of the social body. And Jesus seems to challenge those men who were about Him to observe and see if the Kingdom of God with power should not transform both the individual and the social life. May I illustrate what I mean? A certain young woman teacher in one of the foremost colleges of our country came to her pastor one morning and said,

"Until this winter it has never seemed to me that life was worth living. However, since you have made me see that it is possible for one to live a daily life of holiness unto the Lord, life's visions have been clear, its purposes made definite, and its existence a continual joy. I have come to understand my little life in the light of God's big purpose, and of this authoritative call of the Master to a life of holiness and fellowship with the Eternal." That is, I think, what Jesus meant men to see and the fact He meant to demonstrate among men. The test of His words began to be applied on the day of Pentecost, for the miracle of Pentecost was not so much the coming of the Holy Spirit as the transformation of human life effected by His coming. That was the coming of the Kingdom in power. From that day forward the world has had tangible tests of the working of the theory of Jesus Christ. Not the consummation of the work, but the working process of the Kingdom has been continuously revealed since Christ's other, His communicable self, came to dwell among men. That is my interpretation of the text.

There confronts me at once, for myself and others, this responsible consideration. Are the principles of the Kingdom as Christ enunciated them workable among men? Was He simply a visionary? Was He a dreamer of

dreams which are profoundly impressive but entirely impracticable? Is it possible that, as He said it was, men may in their every-day living have God ruling their life in all its varied and multiform expression? Is the power of the Kingdom realizable? Then, if we are permitted to answer yes, if the world does see the Kingdom come with power, what does this fact mean to the men who embrace the Kingdom, who commit their lives to its service, who are bound by its highest possibilities as by its most authoritative laws? Let us turn to the law and the testimony for our answer. Take first the immediate historical or personal application of the Kingdom idea. The law of that idea is what Christ said about it. He said that the rule of God had come beforehand by anticipation to men, that the miracle and the miracles of His life were revelation of that fact. He declared that the rule of God will reharmonize the individual human life with the life of God. Far back in the history of the human family men had by their social, commercial, political, and religious decadence crowded God down beneath the threshold of consciousness in human life. It was not that they were deliberately unmindful of God, but that at the instigation of the supreme evil intelligence of the universe, they gradually came to enthrone self in their lives as God, and the law of the carnal made im-

possible the rule of the spiritual, or of that supreme Spirit who is the author of the spiritual. Now Jesus clearly recognized the existing conditions of life. He portrayed as no other ever has or ever could the separation of mankind from God through the active control of sin in the life. Sin makes man rebel in heart and criminal by practice. There is in his life no point of possible harmony with the holiness of God. But Jesus declares that this case is not hopeless, because man has left to him the sovereignty of his own will, and he may choose the remedy for sin which God has provided, the remedy for the wrong existent conditions of human life. He may choose also submission to the active exercise of God's will in the life thus redeemed. He may commit himself for the satisfaction of past moral claims barring union with God to Him who is mediator between God and man and receive from Him guarantee for all future need in the maintenance of this new divine relation. Through this process Jesus proposes the destruction of the sin principle in human life and the forgiveness of past offences and the re-enthronement of God there. The simple condition of this astounding proposal, let it be clearly borne in mind, is man's acceptance of God's remedy for sin and man's submission to God's rule in his life. So far the law. Now the testimony.

The New Testament bears witness to the fact that the simple acceptance of this good news as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and in the name of Jesus Christ by His disciples after Pentecost wrought a great transformation. The men who received it became at once men of new ideals, of new plans and purposes, of new activities, of new affiliations. They began to be revealed as men whose lives were powerfully influenced by one profound conviction, that they had become heirs of a new destiny—immortality; and that in the light of immortality they lived in the conscious presence of God and under His immediate sovereignty. Each individual believer proclaimed to the world what he believed in his own heart, that the law of his daily life was the law of God's personal holiness. Moved by this consciousness of God, their lives were transformed so that they came to conform to His life. Base practices were put away; they became men pure-hearted, of gentle manners, and of holy lives.

But the New Testament does not exhaust the personal application. Down through the ages the power of that Kingdom has been seen among men. Everywhere it has been set forth a living, workable, blessed reality. Since that day in which the first group, waiting in an upper room in old Jerusalem, went forth, having received power, the Holy Spirit coming

upon them, until this very hour, the Kingdom of God has been a demonstrable reality among men. It never was a theory to anybody except to the men who had not seen it worked. The King who established it, knew exactly beforehand what it would do, and what He did and taught during His earthly sojourn He has persistently and consistently continued to do and to teach until this day. I appeal to the conscience of the reader and to his judgments of men whose lives he touches daily that this is a fact. On the right hand, on the left hand, before one's very eyes, the power of the Kingdom may be readily observed. One has but to call his own life to witness. Let him remind himself of what manner of man he was. The wickedness of his life, sinful disposition combined with sinful practices, every form of violation of the law of God's holiness, gave to times past an unholy character. Once some were drunkards, profligate, profane, selfish, greedy, evil passions, unforgiving spirits, hardness, cruelty, unspirituality, without the fear of God. Abundant fruitage, all that, from the carnal nature in rebellion against the rule of God and the living in constant fear of the judgment of God. To such an one, there was no comfort in sorrow, no light in the soul's darkness, no certitude in the mind's perplexities, no anchorage of hope, no joy of an uplifting faith, no out-

reach and uplift to the things that are higher and beyond one's own self, but everywhere crass earthliness, utterly without God, without hope, without Christ in the world. The Scriptures exhaust language in describing such an one in such a state. Awful words are used in definition of such a life—reprobate, blind, dull of hearing, impenitent, lost, condemned, unholy, of inordinate desire, taken captive to the will of the devil.

Now let one remind himself of the day of his conviction of sin, when the Spirit of God came, and suddenly as He took the things of Jesus Christ and revealed them, one saw himself in all of the blackness of his rebellion against God, and of his criminal violation of God's law. It had seemed a small thing had one seen only his outward conduct. But in the realization of that divine presence he saw the innermost relation of his heart and mind to God and understood that beneath every transgression lies the fundamental principle of unholiness. He saw himself hopeless, helpless, undone. Night settled upon his soul like a pall of impenetrable darkness. Then through the darkness fell a ray of hope gleaming from the cross of Christ. The long unused hinges of the heart swung open its door and in one supreme act of self-outgoing and surrender to Him who is help and health and hope, Christ was brought in.

No one can ever forget that day or the soul's song of freedom which came with the realization of the lifting of the burden from the soul. Like an eagle, freed from its long-time captivity, the soul spread its wings and soared in heavenly realms, and from the sublime height of the throne of God saw sin; and saw it, blessed be God, forever robbed of its charm and of its power; saw death and the judgment shorn of their sting of terror; saw that never again could sorrow go uncomforted or sin unforgiven; never again could the soul dwell in silence; that weakness and unholiness were of necessity things of the past, because of this divine new relationship which the coming of Christ has established between the soul and God. All this was seen as in a flash of divine intuition, and yet more was seen; for one became conscious of a divine power entering into the life, giving a blessed assurance that henceforth daily he should be kept in the power of God against the pressure of evil from every side. In others words, he understood that there had begun in his life the rule of God with power; the Kingdom of God was within; His hand of authority had the reins of the heart; His forces, divine and spiritual, omnipotent, occupied the citadel of the will and His Spirit was to be blessedly present, without a single moment's cessation, to instruct, enlighten, and guide the mind.

Thus, heart and mind and will, the three-fold nature of man, emotional, intellectual, and volitional, passes with joy under the sovereign power of the eternal God.

Prophetic Application

Now the fact of this power of the rule in any life is prophetic, for the Christ's conception of the power of the Kingdom is the life of God in a constant, unceasing flow, inherently pure and undefiled, flowing into and through man's life as a channel, cleansing that channel by its passage, and reaching other lives by its means. No life cleansed by the spirit-communicated life of God can stop with itself that power of God and its resultant life. By its very nature that life is self-communicable, cannot be housed nor circumscribed. It has an outgo of nature that can neither be restricted nor hindered. That stream must flow out and on from the individual into the great current of social human life, until the stream flows down through all currents, caverns, channels, and labyrinthine mysteries of human experience and finds its way once again back to its source, still pure life, leaving in its course all the foul range of human life sanctified by its passage. The life of God can no more be dammed up in the individual than could the waters which gathered themselves together

from the hills into the valley above Johnstown, Pa., be held by the paltry dam that human hands flung up there to chain its power to selfish interests. As those waters came down under the pour of rain and by the compelling law of gravity gathering themselves together, until resistless power, impatient within their own depths, flung them like some mad fury upon the puny barriers with which human greed and selfishness had thought to stay their course, down to the sea from which they originally came and to which they must inevitably return; so will the life of God, resistless in its gathering power, seeking ever for God Himself, sweep out of its way every barrier of self-interest, pride, greed of money, worldly entanglements that men may lay before its course in their own lives. God has chosen in His sovereign power and holiness that His rule shall extend to the body of humanity through His rule in the life of the individual. "You are the salt of the earth." "You are the light of the world." "Freely you have received, freely give." "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." "Therefore I sanctify Myself that these also may be sanctified in the truth." "Not only for them do I pray, but for all those who through their words shall believe on Me, that the world may know that Thou dost send Me." Thus He has commissioned each believer to be a distributor of

divine life and power. Thus has He ordained that each life come under the power of the Kingdom of God shall become in its energy a reservoir and a dynamo—a reservoir to hold and a dynamo to energize the influence transmitted by the law, the necessary law of self-communicable personality to the lives which each one touches. He has ordained that His power in the social body shall be realized by His power in the unit of social life in the individual. He has shut Himself up to this risk, only it is no risk, since all that God is, is with an irresistible pressure bearing His life down and out to this world of men waiting with their supreme need, their unsatisfied hunger of Him.

Salvation of the Life

All that this means combats the idea that Christ came simply to save the human soul and it proclaims with divine emphasis the salvation of the human life. All that that life is, is saved from sin—passion of soul, exercise of intellect, activities of the physical, the spiritual, and the psychical. There is salvation of every phase and range of human experience, the rescue of all the life even unto the uttermost reach of detail, from the dominion of the devil and the power of sin, its re-enforcement in the service of God with

its final surrender to His sovereignty and present residence within. Jesus Christ contemplates nothing less than a sinless humanity. The rule of God is to be realized in man's business, government, society, literature, influence, words, thoughts, and deeds, in the most sensitive throb of his heart, in the breath that makes his being. The Spirit of God is to permeate, possess, and empower the man until he shall stand in the stead of the Christ in the earth. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price; glorify therefore God in your mortal bodies." "The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, so that it is no longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me." "Ye died and your lives are hid with Christ in God." "In Him we live and move and have our being." These are exceedingly precious promises by which we are made partakers of the divine nature.

Wherever the current of sin has touched and befouled human life, the rule of God must come to arrest and destroy sin's rule, to rescue and invigorate that life with the breath of God's holiness, to change death into life.

To be lost is to perish, to be seized in the grip of the processes of decay, moral and mental, to wander away from God and be unable to find the way back. To be saved is to have stopped the processes of decay, to be restored to the original design for which life

was created when first it was fashioned from the hand of God and to be brought back to the fold and to the fellowship of the Eternal Shepherd Father.

Christ demands then that all men who identify themselves with His rule shall render Him final submission of self, full consecration of possession, and intelligent exercise of energy.

To God and man, working thus together, there is no detail too minute, no problem too hard, no environment too hopeless, no service too small, no gift too insignificant, for we are not our own, and this is the purpose of our redemption. He calls you to-day to a part in the task of the solution of God's problem in the world, the establishment of His rule in the lives of all men, and bids you " do what you can, where you are, with what you have, for Jesus Christ to-day."

III

THE APPROACH TO THE KINGDOM

THE thirteenth chapter of Matthew is the one formal discourse in which Jesus Christ presents His prospectus of the programme of the Kingdom's progress. We have not therein the arguments adduced, but the illustrations through which as windows in the wall of His argument one may view the Master's thought. Of these there are five groups indicating (1) (in the first parable) the Approach to the Kingdom, (2) the Social Aspect of the Kingdom (parable two), (3) the Kingdom organized (parables three and four), (4) the Kingdom Dispensations (parables five and six), (5) the Kingdom Consummation. For our purpose here we shall need to concern ourselves simply with the Approach of the Kingdom, or the first parable.

Jesus contemplates a time and circumstances in which there was no member of the Kingdom of God in the earth, as that Kingdom was related to Himself. No man has, as yet, so received the implanted Word as to have obtained entrance into the Kingdom of Light.

The divine Spirit has not yet been given, and therefore individual regeneration has not yet come to be a personal experience. And our divine Lord intimates the approach for men to the Kingdom.

In this parable the sower is the Holy Spirit. The field of His operations, the world. The seed is the Word of Truth, pre-eminently that word incarnate, Christ Himself. In simple form the meaning of the parable seems to be that the divine Spirit by immediate impression or through the mediatory office of ministry of the church and printing press and personal testimony of individual Christians is to present Jesus Christ through the world of truth to the world. This programme had its first expression on the day of Pentecost. Men will reject, for one cause or another, or receive the Word, and will thereby determine their relation to and entrance into the Kingdom.

In connection with this parable, four historic words of theological interest would seem to need redefining, for words suffer degeneration as truly as do men, and these words which have much to do with the correct understanding of this parable have not escaped the common lot.

The first word we shall look at is the word "conviction."

It is the first purpose of every man who bears a message from God to men to produce

conviction in the hearts of men through the message which he delivers. Power in preaching lies simply in the ability to produce conviction. But the real purport of conviction is the least understood of all spiritual facts. We have suffered it to become a term signifying religious emotion, strong feeling, accompanied by tears or groaning or sleepless anxiety. We have associated it with that experience of certain souls in which the horrors of sin and the terrors of the damned are apparent to excited imaginations. Sorrow and fear have been its two most prominent elements. The result on our religious life of this degeneracy of the word has been anything but wholesome. Spiritual conviction is not primarily spiritual sorrow. To convict is to convince. One convicted of the Spirit is convinced of the Spirit. The word has a twofold application. It is first historical in character and then spiritual. Gospel conviction is conviction of the truth of certain historical facts. Those facts are the facts which the story sets forth as the connecting links in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, "who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead." These facts are certain, definite, and essential statements of the Gospel story as follows: The superhuman birth, the sinless life, the

vicarious death, the triumphant resurrection, the glorious ascension, and the surely promised coming again of Jesus Christ our Lord. Apart from these facts there is no Gospel and no faith. If any one of these facts is lost or discredited the whole Gospel fabric falls and is destroyed for the only Christ that man has is the Jesus of the New Testament story and that Jesus is the Jesus of whom these essential fundamental facts are declared to be true.

It is, of course, quite easy to prove to any open-minded seeker the historical verity of these facts. It is a common principle at law that the unrefuted testimony of two reputable witnesses to any fact substantiates it as fact. We have in the Gospels four incontestable witnesses who from independent sources have given their testimony to all these essential facts; and Paul, a later writer, declares that when he wrote there were five hundred men and women who were witnesses of their truth. Should we even be required to set aside this testimony which may seem to be partial and partisan, the world is required to give some explanation of the presence, power, and ministry of the Church of Christ in the earth. To do that necessitates the pursuit of the evidence of its life back through the centuries, which leads by an inevitable and sure historical path back to the banks of the Jordan to the same Jesus and these same incontrovertible facts.

Now, I wish to repeat that apart from the conviction of truth of those facts there can be no vital faith in Jesus Christ, for those are His facts and to reject them is to reject Him. When the divine Spirit begins to deal with men and presents to them the Son of God for salvation these facts are the ones on which His messengers and ministers are required to dwell.

But the historical conviction is not enough. There is no power to transform character in the simple acceptance as true of certain historical facts whatever they are. An intellectual assent to truth has never yet transferred the affections or transformed the souls of men. Now the Spirit's method is to take these historical facts, and upon them as a foundation, to bring to the souls of men spiritual conviction, conviction of spiritual relation to the Christ of these facts. Jesus said to His disciples: "When He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on me, of righteousness because I go to the Father, of judgment because the prince of this earth has been judged." The first step then in spiritual conviction is the acceptance of the historical Gospel as true and as having relation to one's own life and condition before Almighty God. A real consciousness of sin comes to man only in view of his

conscious relation to God as revealed through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not convict of sins, that is, of transgressions of the law. His conviction is of Sin. He proves to man his guilt, deep, desperate, damnable guilt, not because of what he has done, but because of that vileness and hardness of heart which makes him to persist in being a sinner in the face of the abundant salvation from sin which God offers to men in the person of Jesus Christ. We have usually stopped with a sanctimonious satisfaction when we have quoted the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of John and have missed the tremendous significance of the verses that follow. Let us here put them together: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth is not condemned; he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men choose darkness rather than light." That is, God offers a remedy for sin and the sin-sick soul prefers its sickness to health. God offers reconciliation and man prefers rebellion. God offers eternal life and man

prefers to dare death in the pursuit of the pleasures of sin for a season. Oh, God is not concerned primarily with what man does; with the fruit upon the limbs of the tree of his life; but let heaven and earth witness His anxiety to strike at the root of that tree whose poisonous fruits so fill and plague human life. The divine Spirit points out proof, convicts of sin, the sin principle, the rebellious attitude, the sinful relation which the soul assumes to God, and from which there comes forth as a natural growth all the evil fruitage of transgressions and sins. That is the divine method and the divine purpose. As the sinner is brought face to face with infinite holiness in the person of Christ, and of divine compassion in the death of Christ, and the heart yearning of God in the Gospel of Christ, he cannot but see himself in his true nature, his true character, through the revelation which that Gospel makes. Too often the minister and sinner are content to deal with superficial conditions, to have regard for the sore on the surface, to be concerned with the pain that hurts rather than to get back to the underlying cause and strike at the root of the matter. It is easy enough for a minister or a Christian worker himself to convict a man of his sins of adultery, of lying, of stealing, and all irregularities of conduct. It needs no divine Spirit to force one to face those facts in the life because they

stand out like the searings of a hot iron upon the conscience, but only the Spirit of God can reveal the hidden source of the foul thing, and He only in relation to Jesus Christ. Over against the foulness of conduct, the Gospel of the Son of God proffers an imputed righteousness. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not charging unto them their trespasses," for "Him who knew no sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." In the light of the revelation of what one is and of what God offers, immediately one cries out for a new nature, a nature that will be set against sin and empowered against sin as was the nature of our Lord. And so the second step in conviction is the conviction of righteousness. Man is not cleansed simply and left alone to struggle against sin. He is not placed in the position of being cleansed from his past sins and left in his natural weakness to fall inevitably into sin again. Salvation is restoration plus spiritual empowering. The best God can do for man is to restore him to normal human life—and empower him to live it. God offers not only an imputed righteousness but an imparted righteousness. Through the divine Spirit the Gospel declares that holiness is communicated in the divine nature, of which a man becomes a partaker through the exceeding precious promises that are given to him

in Jesus Christ. The nature of Christ, the Spirit of God, enters into the man and the fulness of his being becomes essentially holy, so that within himself, though from the external and divine source, he has unfailing streams of power, spiritual illumination, spiritual visions, spiritual quickening of the powers of moral perception. All these things come to him instinctively, intuitively, as the divine nature possesses and controls him.

In the consciousness of that new empowering, he realizes the third step in the Spirit's conviction, namely, that the devil's power has been broken in him and that in that breaking is definite and realizable promise that the devil's power shall finally be broken everywhere. Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of the devil in putting away sin. The sinner is forced to the conviction that the devil's cause is a losing cause, that if he ties himself to that cause he will go down in ruin without remedy. The cause of sin is a sinking ship which he must abandon immediately and at any cost.

When he has reached that state of conviction, decision follows hard upon it and embracing the Gospel of the blessed God he finds that all things are changed, old things have passed away, all things are new. He is a new man with new relations, new powers, and a new destiny.

The next word needing to be redefined is the word faith. No theological term is less understood or more seriously misunderstood. Everything in the range of Christian experience from simple intellectual assent to emotional hysteria has been and is called faith. I have nowhere seen emphasis put upon the fact that saving faith must embrace the two elements involved in scriptural conviction. Yet this is unquestionably true. What the theologians call fiduciary trust must be both historical and spiritual. The faith that saves is not just any faith in any thing, but is primarily credence given to certain facts which the Gospel story sets forth. These facts are, it is needless to say, the identical facts with which Scriptural conviction is concerned and in themselves make up the historical person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. However one may be moved by feeling or by spiritual fancies concerning an imaginary Christ, faith in no other Christ than the historical Christ of the Gospel has ever wrought efficiently in saving men from the power and love of sin. In a Gospel sense, to believe anything one must believe the right thing as embodied in Christ and His atoning work. It is not sufficient to believe in Christ; one must accept Jesus the Christ, for he that denies Jesus denies the Father also. In this day when men are multiplying intellectual creeds, too much

emphasis cannot be put upon the necessity of faith in the New Testament historical Jesus of Nazareth. He is the Christ of God, according to Peter's bold confession at Cæsarea Philippi and according also to the whole revelation of these inspired Scriptures.

But the times demand an equal emphasis upon the fact that mere acceptance of the historical Christ is not in itself a saving factor in human life. The character of the acceptance must be clearly defined and much insisted upon. There must be a spiritual apprehension and personal appropriation of the facts in one's individual life. Dr. Campbell Morgan quotes from Mark Rutherford, "Faith is not belief in a fact, demonstration, or promise. It is a sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something which enables us to act upon the fact, the susceptibility to all the strength there is in the fact, so that we are controlled by the fact. Nobody can precisely define it. All that we can say about it is that it comes by the grace of God, so that failure to see the truth is not so lamentable as failure to be moved by the truth." Dr. Morgan adds, "Now faith that saves is not intellectual conviction of the Deity of Christ. It is conviction that He is the Son of God and the yielding of the life to the power of that fact." One might believe absolutely in the integrity and solvency and efficiency of a bank and assume

no personal risk in relation to it. But his faith in the bank will assume an entirely different character when he brings all his earnings and commits them in trust to the bank. So as regards the soul and Christ. One may yield to Christ highest honour and reverence, faith in His historical being and even in His vicarious death, but it is quite another matter when one comes to yield himself and his hopes for eternal blessedness in trust to Jesus Christ who was dead, but is alive forevermore. Faith that saves is the full and final yielding of the life to the power of the Christ facts as set forth in the Gospel, the commitment of self to Jesus Christ for time and eternity. The deposit not only of one's sins but of one's soul and of one's life and of one's destiny in trust with this Christ—that is faith.

Vital faith in Christ involves all the threefold faculties of the moral nature. As regards the intellect, one's attitude must be that of complete submission. Jesus Christ is the final authority from whose word I make no appeal and concerning whose authority in my life I permit no other being in the universe to raise a question.

As to the emotions the attitude will be one of loving devotion, the outgoing of ultimate affection.

As to the will there must needs be complete surrender. The abandonment of one's self

to the mastery of this divine Lord. The prostration of one's being before Him crying out with Thomas, " My Lord, and my God."

The next two words needing to be redefined may be, indeed they must be, taken together. We have come rather habitually to use interchangeably the words Conversion and Regeneration. I think they are never so used in the Scripture. The distinction is so vital and clear that a few simple sentences will set it forth. Conversion is a moral change only and may rise from any one of many causes. Regeneraation is a spiritual change in man's nature, proceeding always and only from God. A great deal of our present-day religious experience is purely moral. Men change their moral habits in response to some intellectual or emotional or volitional impulse, all of which are short of a divine origin. Men are nauseated with the physical nausea of sin and so abandon their evil practice. They are moved to a sense of moral shame by the pleadings of human love, mother, wife, friend, and so quit their meanness. They come to a realization of social loss, financial loss, and through a lively recognition of self-interest, abandon the wrong course and the destructive indulgences. Such a change was accurately described by Jesus in His parable of the man who cast the devil out of his house, but brought in no strong occupant to keep the devil out. So that the

devil simply went up and down for a while seeking some more convenient lodging place, and finding none, took with him seven other devils and came back into the same house, the same life. The last state of the man was worse than the first, not because his habits were more bestial, but because in his cleansed condition he had a whole troop of demons resident within, whereas before he was controlled only by the demon lust. It perhaps needs to be said plainly and often that a man may be converted and yet find his ultimate portion in hell. For it is certain that if there is no change other than a moral change a change of moral conduct, there is no salvation from sin. Salvation contemplates not only the destruction of the fruit which grows upon the tree of sin, but the rooting up of the tree itself. In other words, there must be not only a change of conduct, but a radical change, a transforming change of nature as well. Salvation is restoration to normal manhood plus a re-enforcement by the divine Spirit to maintain the integrity of that restored manhood.

Now, regeneration is what the word contains, a new birth. It is the birth of a new nature which makes the man a new creature, the law of whose life will be a new law of righteousness and truth and just dealing. Right relation to God is its fundamental prin-

ciple and right relation to man is its constant and unfailing result. Regeneration results always and only from a vital union of the believer with God through his faith in Jesus Christ. That needs to be said more plainly. Let us try again. Regeneration is the birth of a new nature, occurring in man's life through the communication of God's Spirit upon the fulfilment of the one condition of man's full committal of himself to God through the exercise of a vital spiritual faith in Jesus Christ. Let us try once again. Regeneration is a new creation in which the old or carnal nature dies and a new spiritual nature springs into being by the operation of God's Spirit through the truth of Jesus Christ to the control of which the sinner yields himself. It is an experience, definite as to time, peculiar as to character, and apparent in results. When it happens to any one there is an inner consciousness of its reality and outward expression of its energy. Both himself and his fellows are made at once aware of the transformation of nature and life which occurs. Should any one read these lines to whom such an experience is not a vital consciousness, let him, for his soul's sake, stop and yield himself now, without reservation, to the sovereign will of God and cry unto Him through Jesus Christ for that change apart from which there is no saving knowledge of God at all.

In view of these definitions the treatment of this text needs only to be an application.

There are four groups of hearers to whom the divine Spirit makes appeal by the presentation of Jesus Christ as the one mediator between God and man.

There are those whom He calls the wayside hearers, men whose souls are dull. Circumstances, associations, business, sins, long yielded to, hardly give the seed a chance in their lives. The folks who have become worldly wise, *blasé,* that great multitude who have opened their souls to every form of knowledge and experience till they are not to be moved by the oft-repeated treadings of scouted and mocked at moral experiences. These have made their minds a highway for every new creed, speculation, and philosophy, all of which have been flouted with their contempt as they have passed on till there is always ready some new idea or suggestion or theory to seize upon and destroy any message which may be presented concerning life's destiny and duty. They will concern themselves indifferently with every form of life philosophy and yield themselves to none.

There are, then, the stony ground hearers, those whom the Master Himself describes as not having sufficient depth of character really to yield vitally and permanently to God. Men who hear the Gospel messages with emotions

only. They do hear when some man makes them feel good or bad, when the fountain of their tears is opened by the skilled hand of eloquence or pathos. They would cry just as readily over the death of Little Joe as over the death on Calvary. Impulsive, sincere, but unstable, they quickly yield and quickly fall. This is a class of men frequently but mightily stirred by the excitement of a great meeting. The character of preaching is too often designed for the very purpose of stirring the emotions of this class and lending to the preacher a false and foolish reputation for having power as an evangelist. Churches are left with intricate and delicate problems that usually result in a permanent impairment of spiritual life and power from which there seems to be no present remedy.

There are, then, the thorny ground hearers. Here are a great multitude of men whose lives are so strong and deep and true that something must grow therein and Christ makes His appeal to these. The divine Spirit presents Him as Saviour and Lord and there is an immediate response of the soul of the man who recognizes the true value and appreciation of life. A value and appreciation is here which if cultivated would dominate the whole life, but alas, the seed which is allowed to germinate is given no care or cultivation. Yielding to the present pleasure, to the spirit

of this age, the mad desire for riches, and the resistless call of the times to self-interests, the carnal customs, business, clubs, pleasures, and sports, drive out and crowd down any legitimate fruitage of Jesus Christ's inner possession of the life. These men believe the Gospel, sympathize with it, and often in the quiet moment earnestly propose to yield to it, but alas, the daily recurring miracle of folly and unfaith is repeated and the spirit of this age and the care of this world and the anxiety about the thousand and one material and tangible facts of life are permitted to choke Christ out. Thus the life of man is left a barren, fruitless, spiritually unlovely thing. Many men there are who have Christ within, but He is a dead Christ, choked to death by their own hand as they grasp and hold on to the pleasures of sin, and business of these present days. Would to God that the Church of Christ and its ministry might arouse themselves to the tremendous import of this condition and the significant truth of this statement, that there might be organized a mighty spiritual campaign, persistent, zealous, God-directed for the reclamation of this fertile soil of humanity from the possession of the weeds that choke and destroy. What might not happen if once the Church would seriously turn to this serious business of saving men? If it should for one decade be frankly and finally done with a frit-

tering away of its time and talent and opportunity in the senseless busying of itself with social amenities and nonentities, with the everlasting pursuit of purposeless pennies by the foolish purveying of the unholy mammon of this world, and calling it the service of God.

Well, thank God, there is a class whom the Master designated as good soil. Men who hear the Gospel and receive it into honest hearts and yield themselves to the results of that word which they hear. Men who pay attention to the Gospel message, yield to it, subject themselves to its control in their daily living, and are thus transformed by it and made children of God and heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ of the eternal inheritance which God has reserved for the righteous.

I have read that Gilbert à Becket, the father of the Bishop, Thomas à Becket, during the Crusades, was captured and for many months was held a prisoner in the home of a Persian nobleman, with whose daughter he fell in love. The young princess returned his affection and sought to effect his escape. On the night of the effort at escape the plot was betrayed, and while Gilbert succeeded in making his escape the princess was captured and kept a prisoner in her father's castle. Months later she managed to make her escape, and knowing only two English words, London, and Gilbert, she started out from her Persian home to find her

lover. Every one, of course, everywhere, knew London, and so helped her on her way. When she came to London, no longer needing that word, she began to repeat at every chance meeting the word of all words to her, Gilbert. For many days she wandered through the streets of the great city, sometimes wept over, sometimes laughed at, sometimes chased by a mob of ruffianly boys. One day with a mob at her heels she turned into the street where Gilbert lived. His servant was sent out to see the cause of the commotion and returning to report, his master came, recognized his beloved, brought her into his home, and made her his wife. So a human soul, having enshrined in itself only two words, Jesus and Heaven, the one its inspiration and the other its goal, has made of itself a good soil in which the seed of the Kingdom springs up into eternal life. And its hopes will find an abundant fruition in the home and presence of its beloved.

As you have pondered, beloved, you have unconsciously but of necessity been making your soul a soil. Upon your own choice depends the character of that soil. Will you give the Gospel message a chance? Will you choke out of your life the inexpressible riches of grace and glory which God stands even now ready to crowd into your life through faith in Jesus Christ? Will you permit the

high and holy emotions of this Spirit-charged hour to evaporate in delightful tears or shallow impulses? Will you not the rather rise with all the depth and purpose possible to your being, and yielding to Jesus Christ embrace Him through faith and through submission of your soul to Him as Lord? Commit now your destiny, your way, your life to Him and enter with Him through the gates into the Kingdom of God.

IV

MEN OF THE INNER CIRCLE

THERE are various designations of the groups of men who gathered about our Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. These designations were not without their significance. It would seem also that they were not without symbolic meaning, for the multitudes who gathered about Jesus contained in themselves the human elements of all the multitudes of all the centuries. His disciples in their various and varying degrees of development, present all the problems of discipleship. A careful study of these groupings of men about Jesus will, therefore, repay the patient seeker after truth, both in that which is direct and in that which is inferential.

There was first, then, "The Multitude," composed of men and women, friendly and hostile, including Scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees; seekers after curiosity and sensation, and all others who for any reason were attracted by the fame of the Teacher, the love of His adherents, or the opposition of His enemies.

Second, "The many who believed on Him."

There is a word about this group in John 2:23. "Many believed on His name, beholding His signs which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man." These were those who were won to Jesus through persuasion of the objective, who saw and heard and handled the word of life and for a little season walked in the light of His revelation. But the appeal of the Christ never reached the subjective sense of this multitude and so had no power to transform their life or to produce abiding results therein. They were scattered after the sermon on eating His flesh, preached at Capernaum. They said "a hard saying, who can hear it?" They found that quite sufficient excuse to abandon both Him and His cause. They were also known as "disciples" but in a broad, general sense, rather than in a personal and particular way. Their attitude to Christ was friendly rather than hostile, but they were not formally allied to His cause. The best they ever did for Him was to create a sympathetic atmosphere in which His messages might be delivered and the cause of His Kingdom pleaded.

Third, a group known as "His Disciples" embraces, one judges, about five hundred persons won to Him during the three years of

His ministry. For these there were certain essential qualifications which Luke sets forth in order: they must hate their own life, they must bear their own cross, they must forsake all. They must follow Him. It was these demands that kept recruits out of the ranks of His disciples and lent caution to the enthusiasm of many a would-be follower.

Fourth, a group known as "The Disciples," or "the twelve," who were always with Him. They were His advance agents in at least one preaching tour, Luke 9:1 following. They stood between Him and the multitude in a mediation of service, as when He fed the five thousand. They received His revelations and teachings about the Kingdom. They had the mystery of the parables explained to them. They were with Him when the first confession of His divinity was made in the region of Cæsarea Philippi as they had previously seen the manifesting forth of His glory in His first miracle at Cana of Galilee. They were with Him at the institution of the supper and at His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. They received the messages of the resurrection. These were selected out of the larger group of "His Disciples" and they in turn were subjected to a like discriminating selection.

Fifth, "The Inner Circle" contained those known as "The Three," Peter, James, and John. These were permitted privileges and

given experiences granted no others. It would seem a far truer grouping of the twelve to make two groups, consisting of the three and the nine rather than the usual four groups. It is not possible to believe that this classification indicates mere favouritism to the three on the part of the blessed Lord. If they were a group to themselves, if they did receive revelations, if they entered into privileges and experiences not accorded to others, there was a divine reason for it, and I believe we may with all reverence seek the Lord's secret. Nor will it be hard to find this secret if one bring to the task a heart keen with hunger for a closer walk and a higher personal communion with his Lord.

We will begin, then, with a study of the attitude of the nine toward the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. A careful study of the Gospel story will reveal the fact that their attitude was to Jesus, first, fiduciary. They did believe on Him, they had committed themselves to Him, they were ready both to suffer and to die for His cause. But their attitude was purely official and never became intensely personal. Not one of them, so far as I am able to discover, ever preferred a personal request to Jesus. None of them ever made a personal blunder in relation to Him. Even when they quarrelled in the way as to who should be greatest in the Kingdom; even

when they were moved with indignation at the boldness of James and John who sought the first place of conspicuous service at the right hand and left hand of the King in His Kingdom, it was among themselves. They never brought their disputes to Jesus. Andrew and Philip came nearest to occupying a personal relationship to Jesus, but their conceptions were clearly official and impersonal. For instance, when Andrew found Peter he said, " We have found the Messiah," using the official title of the Christ. They were never able to approach the Master in a purely personal way. If anything of serious moment occurred with any one of them, he called a committee meeting of the group or a portion of the group and presented the matter to the Lord in proper official form. Philip and Andrew had to get together before they could bring the Greeks to Jesus as recorded in the twelfth chapter of John. One is rather amazed at that whole story. For when men sought out the Lord the most natural thing in the world would have been for Philip, to whom they came, to have taken them straightway into His presence. He was ever open and accessible to men. It seems there must have been both an intellectual and moral stupidity in Philip's inability to handle so simple a situation without calling in another official representative of the disciples. This fact rendered them incompetent to receive any-

thing but an official revelation or to do anything more than official work. And it seems from such study as I have been able to make that the Master's revelations to them were almost if not altogether official. Not one of them is ever heard from out of connection with his office and the apostolic group. While they were loyal to Him and did serve Him, there is everywhere apparent an absence of zeal, spontaneity, moral initiative, and spiritual power in their lives because their attitude is official.

But all this was different with the three. The whole story reveals their personal attitude to Jesus. Where others trusted Him, they loved Him, and loved Him enough to dare a mistake; to make blunders and quickly readjust themselves. Take Peter, for instance, who confessed Him, rebuked Him, drew sword for Him, denied Him, and with a broken heart sought Him out to be restored by Him to his office and his God-appointed tasks. One finds evidence of this in John's assumption of a personal relationship to Jesus that gave him the right to speak for the Master in the case where the disciples found certain men who were casting out devils in the name of the Lord Jesus. John forbade them. But the beautiful part of the whole story lies in the fact that he came straight to Jesus with his presumption and asked him, " Master, did we do right to rebuke

one who cast out demons in Thy name, since he followed not us?" He was immediately set right and given a broader vision of relationship to Christ when the Master said, "Forbid him not, for no one who casts out demons in My name can lightly speak evil of Me." James and John also came to Him, asking the personal privilege of sitting one on His right hand and one on His left, when He should come into His Kingdom. We may not properly believe that this was merely the prompting of an earthly ambition. There may have been that in the request indeed, but it was the minor rather than the major note. Jealous love for His person prompted them. For they realized that when He came into His Kingdom and to His throne, He would be constantly exposed to all the dangers of a passionate religious hate, of intense political opposition, of personal resentment, and the thousand and one intrigues that centre around the throne and especially around the newly established throne. What they desired most was that they might be placed in position to guard His person from attack, from assassination, from assault, from the endless and nagging annoyances of the critical, hostile, and unsympathetic throng about His throne. They asked Jesus to permit them to constitute themselves His bodyguard; to put their bodies between His person and danger, and their lives between His life

and jeopardy. I have not seen this view suggested elsewhere, but it is a rather amazing fact that it has not been, in view of the fact that Jesus did grant to them to share His cup and His baptism. He could not give them the official seat, for that was not His to bestow. Yet He did grant to them the other and higher thing, the privilege of sharing His danger, His passion, His sorrow, His death. Jesus takes these three with Him into the house of Jairus, onto the Mount of Transfiguration, and finally into the Garden of Gethsemane; and gives to them in addition to the Gospel which they received, the revelation of His parables and mysteries of His kingdom, an intimate personal revelation of Himself.

John, whom Jesus loved, leaned on His bosom at the supper table. Peter at the sea of Galilee is asked but one question by those divinely merciful lips, "Lovest thou Me, Peter?" couching His question first to embrace only the higher ethical love, "*agapas me pleon touton.*" Peter answered, "Lord, you know that I love you," "*philo se.*" Jesus asked him a second time, "Do you love Me?" "*agapas me.*" "Lord, you know that I love you," "*philo se.*" Jesus said the third time to him, "Simon, do you love Me?" "*phileis me.*" Now Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "*phileis me,*" and he said, "Lord, you see through all things, you know

that I love you." Peter had been accustomed to his personal human relation to Jesus so long that he was either unwilling or unable to be lifted by the Master to the height of the ethical love. And when Jesus abandoned His demand for response to the question of ethical love and questioned Peter's love for Him on the human and personal plane, it broke the heart of the impulsive, headstrong, often imprudent but never unloving disciple.

Is it too much to suppose that this grouping of disciples still continues? The fault of the greater number of both disciples and ministers now lies in the fact that their relation to the Lord Jesus is purely official and rarely ever, if ever, ascends into the realm of the personal. May we not explain the higher quality of the faith of some, the higher sanctity of some lives, the higher consecration of some activities, the larger service of some servants in the Kingdom by the simple knowledge that their relationship to the Lord is almost altogether intensely personal? It has seemed as one has considered the great outstanding exponents of Gospel truth, the great heroes of Kingdom service, the men who have been the revelators of the Lord to each succeeding generation, that the secret of the life and its works lies in that supreme moment wherein the individual passes out of the simply formal and official relation to the Lord into a conscious communion of

personal fellowship. One ceased to be the servant and entered into the realm of friendship.

There is a test by which each one of all His disciples may know whether we bear the official or personal relationship to our Lord. If you will come back to the gate of the Garden of Gethsemane I will undertake to show you whether you belong to the group of the nine or the group of the three. The nine He left at the gate of His Gethsemane. Does He leave you there? The three He brought within the gate, forward into the darkness, into the region of His soul's tragic desolation when He sought for relief of its travail and found none. Has He brought you within His Gethsemane? What is your relation to Jesus in His sorrow? Yet I do not wish to leave that question just there. It is not simply relation to His sorrow but His supreme and tragic sorrow of vicarious shame which explains His cross and fulfils His ministry.

There is a significant word used about the Lord in the garden that needs more attention than it has usually had. It is said that after He had brought the three into the inner darkness of the garden, He left them there and went forward a little, and fell on the ground and prayed, saying, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Three times He cried out this prayer in such mortal agony of pleading that the sweat of His body

was blood, and the liquid pools of His life gathered about His prostrate form as His soul trod the winepress of God's wrath alone. I cannot consent to that interpretation of the prayer which gives Him a fear that He will not reach the cross, or brings to Him any temptation or anxiety as to the course He should pursue. I think there is a higher and more heavenly reason than has yet been suggested. To me that cry means nothing less than that our Lord was required of the Divine Father to take, in His mediatorial capacity as Saviour, the cup of man's sins and drink it to the dregs. In bolder but not less true language, He was required to become incarnate sin, who was incarnate holiness. He had always been the companion of sinners. He had been more, He had been the friend, the chum of sinners. The outcast, the offscouring of the earth found ready access both to His presence and to His heart. The doorway to His life was large enough to admit the whole world and they might come with their sins and find themselves welcomed and forgiven and cherished. The miracle of compassion lies in the fact that the Son of God in His infinite holiness was willing for the sake of manifesting redeeming love to associate Himself with sinful men and abolish the distances and the differences between Himself and them by lifting them to His level. But miracle of all miracles is found

in that God required infinitely more than this being the companion of sinners. He must consent to become the sin of sinners, to assume, in His own proper person, the vileness, the fault, the consequences of sin, and the name of sin. He must take the cup into which the dregs of God's wrath against sin had been wrung out, and lift it in patient willingness to His own sinless lips, and drink it to the last bitter taste. I do not wonder that He revolted, that He withdrew Himself from that stained cup, that He cried out in His holiness, "Is there no other way? Can salvation be wrought out by no other course? Oh, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Then fighting His fight to a victorious end, rising out of the grave of His buried self, having finally emptied Himself as He takes the form of the servant, He cries, "Not My will, but Thine be done. I take the cup, I drink it to the dregs, I surrender my holiness for man's sin." And as He goes out of the Garden of Gethsemane He goes out not only sin bearer but sin itself, to be lifted to the cross and there in His own body nail our sin to the cross for evermore. Sin died, and we died unto sin, and are made alive unto God for evermore. It is that which Paul declares in his second letter to the Corinthians, in which he said: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not charging unto them their trespasses, and having

committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ as though God were entreating by us, we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." And the climax of all that lies in this: "Him who knew no sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." II Corinthians 5:19 following. So that if we understand correctly the Gethsemane agony of the Lord we understand it to mean His final and full surrender of Himself and His will to God. The yielding up of all, the payment of the last penny for the sake of conformity to the plan and purpose and will of God. It was to that He brought the three; gave to them the privilege of watchful prayer for Him while He fought out that lonely struggle; the privilege of seeing Him in mortal agony and in immortal triumph. He gave to them the privilege of beholding that supreme hour of victorious struggle in which He emerged out of the disasters and storm of the conflict to the high calm of the voluntary embracing of the beloved will of the Father. It is nothing to the point that they slept through His ordeal: that in weariness of flesh and anxiety of spirit they succumbed to the weakness of the mortal. He Himself said the spirit is indeed willing, the weakness of the flesh is all too apparent.

Now, then, the presence of these three takes

on a new significance. One does not reveal his heart-break to another whose relation is more largely official than otherwise. Only to one who occupies the inner sanctuary of the heart, the home, the life, does one reveal the inner sanctity of grief, of personal struggle and conflict. It was even so with the Christ. No mortal could behold that awful hour, that triumphant hour. Yet so far as He Himself could bring mortal man He brought the three who had been His personal friends and companions through the lonely years of His misunderstood ministry. And the inner circle is revealed in the inner relation of these to the Gethsemane struggle and sorrow of our blessed Lord.

Let no one think that our Lord has lost His Gethsemane or that He ever will lose it. Over and over in the building of the Kingdom must His body, His church, pass through the shadows, the experiences and travail of that awful hour. Over and over will He have need for some whom He can bring with Him into the darkness and loneliness and tragedy of the isolation in which the final test of yielding to God's plan is wrought out. Does He permit you to share the agony of His travail, when He pours out His soul unto death? Does your ministry, your Christian service, stop just short of agony of soul? How near do you come in your ministry to the place where He sweats

blood? Ah, Jesus brought the three into His Gethsemane. He trusted them with His sorrow and His danger. They failed Him then, poor, weak flesh, just as you and I with heaviness of heart-break have failed Him often, and cried out our sorrow through the loneliness of separation caused by sin. But blessed be God for this! He does not withdraw His trust from them.

We find the Scripture silent as to the fate of the eight. Judas having hanged himself and gone to his own place, only eight of the nine remained. We know not their destination at all save by tradition and legend. But of the three, we find that James, who asked the privilege of sitting at His right hand or His left hand, who was given to drink of His cup, is not refused that high honour, for he finds a short route to heaven by way of Herod's sword, while by his death the Bride escaped a while. John, who would share with James the seat of honour, the honour which exposes self to the danger of his beloved, John who is promised by his Master the privilege of sharing His baptism of suffering, finds his Patmos, and in lonely exile fills up the cup of his Lord's suffering. Peter, primate even among the three in service, in love, in impulsive, spontaneous outgoing of himself for the Master, in wondrous compensation for that hour of weakness, in which he first drew sword for

and then fled in cowardly denial of his Lord, is permitted to die as his Lord died, upon a Roman cross.

So one is led to thank God that if our Lord's Gethsemane continues, if there are still moments in which the heart, the life of the Church is in travail; moments in which He needs friends of the Inner Circle, friends like these three sensitive souls, pressed with His sorrow, He does not fail of them. There are those whose only love song is to Him who has such perfect love that their love knows no bounds. "It only creates a boundless, uncalculating self-abnegation that transforms the character and is the parent of every virtue. Side by side with the terrorism and superstitions of dogmatism, there have ever existed in Christianity those who would echo the wish of St. Theresa, that she could blot out both heaven and hell and serve God for Himself alone; and the power of the love of Christ has been displayed alike in the most heroic pages of Christian martyrdom, in the most pathetic pages of Christian resignation, in the tenderest pages of Christian charity. It was shown by the martyrs who sank beneath the fangs of wild beasts, extending to the last moment their arms in the form of the cross they loved; who ordered their chains to be buried with them as the insignia of their warfare; who looked with joy upon their ghastly

wounds, because they had been received for Christ; who welcomed death as the bridegroom welcomes the bride, because it would bring them near to Him." * There have been a great company, there is a great company, of those who still have no higher boast than that they bear branded in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Men who, like Paul, fill up within themselves the sufferings of their Lord. Men these are, who lay aside every weight and the sin which is admired of many, that they may with patience run the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith, that they may with their Lord endure the cross, despising its shame for the sake of the joy set before them.

One has not reached the Inner Circle of the Master's confidence, the place of this privilege of partnership in all that the Master felt and planned, till he has come to experience his Master's loathing of sin, simultaneously with a willingness to come into vicarious contact with sin. He must first see the wreckage of his human brotherhood through the ravages of sin and with his Master fling himself with bare hands and bleeding heart upon the task of destroying sin and redeeming the world of sinners at any cost to himself. Let me be perfectly plain. This means nothing less than perpetual dwelling within the shadow of the

*Lecky.

cross, with an experience as far as man may experience the limitlessness of the infinite humiliation, suffering, purpose, and passion of the blessed Lord. It means walking by the way of constant self-emptying through the shadows of daily death with Christ for men. It means a hiding of one's life and yet a hiding with Christ in God. If one is inclined to say this is a hard road for mortal feet to tread, let him remember that the way of the cross leads home, and ask himself who would mind the journey when the way leads home?

V

MEN AND INFLUENCE

ONE of the most characteristic and typical of all the Old Testament stories is that of David and Nathan. David had sinned against God. His sin, however, was far more than a spiritual lapse. It involved the murder of the soldier Uriah, the seduction of his wife, the spoiling of his home. It was a disastrous blow at the very foundations of social order and integrity. It was a subversion of domestic, as well as social righteousness. David seems to have been either unaware of his crime or indifferent to its consequences. By strange spiritual anomaly there followed upon this sin of the King an unusual moral activity. He was never more rigorous in his treatment of the enemies of Israel. He was never more indignant in his condemnation of immoral social practices in the abstract. Nathan the prophet found him in this temper when he came and set before him the beautiful and striking parable of the rich man and his poor neighbour. The rich man, with his flocks and stores in abundance, despoiled his neigh-

bour of the one little ewe lamb which he possessed in order to feed his visitor. David's wrath was aroused and he immediately demanded to know the author of this outrage that he might deal out to him summary punishment. With bold consciousness of his own unassailable position, the prophet replied, "Thou art the man, for thou didst have all Israel from which to choose a wife and thou hast taken away the wife of Uriah and had him slain in battle." The thirty-second Psalm is a record of David's response as in humiliation and shame he bent before the Lord in recognition of the fact that before he could administer public righteousness he must discipline his own unholy nature. Before the social body over which he presided could be made subject to the law of God he must himself as individual man be brought in harmony with the divine will.

Here, then, is the fundamental note of the Gospel proclamation. The first message of God is to the individual. It concerns sin, man's wrong relation to God; it concerns righteousness, man's right relation to God; it concerns judgment, man's relation to the author of evil, the enemy of God and man. Jehovah has but one word for any man until he has completely adjusted his relation to Him. His word is, "Get right with God." The Gospel sets forth the terms upon which one may be made right

with Him. No offer of services, no rendering of worship, is acceptable until one has yielded himself. That was the trouble with Cain, who brought his offering of the best of his firstfruits. He did not bring a heart and a will in submission to divine law. He made his offering quite independently of his own submission. That is a thing which God cannot brook. The same trouble was experienced by a young university student some years ago who declared himself quite willing to crawl around the world on his knees if by that means he might obtain eternal life, but if it depended on the submission of his will to God, then he neither could nor would do that.

God's answer to the sinner who offers his service before he brings himself, is the answer Darius is said to have received from Alexander when he had sent to the conqueror of the world a rich and costly gift. Returning his gift Alexander sent this message: "Your sword first, then your gifts."

No man is in position to render social service to his fellowmen in its right relations and motives and outcome who has not made himself square with God's supreme moral law, who has not brought his own life into harmony with fundamental righteousness and holiness.

Came a man to a minister in his study, mightily interested about the dereliction and

moral failure of mutual friends. As the pastor listened to what the visitor had to say, he was made conscious, sickeningly so, of the heavy breath of alcohol and the heavy evidence of lust upon the lips and face of the speaker. And directly he waived the consideration of others and directly and plainly said to his visitor, "You are in no position to trouble with the sins of another until you have corrected this sin which has stamped itself upon your face." Then through the hour that followed he persistently held his visitor to the facing of his own sin and directly the man arose in anger and said, "I came to talk about others and you seem to be obsessed with the idea that we can only talk about myself." There can hardly be a doubt that the pastor was right, nor can there be a doubt that this is God's insistent method with men. Get yourself right first. Clear the deck of your ship before you take action against the enemy. Let the physician be sound before he practises. Let the minister of the law keep the law as he administers it.

There can be no vital Christian faith apart from a social issue. Yet this needs to be kept clear. The new nature in the Christian determines the nature of the social issue. Apples grow upon a tree because it is an apple tree, not otherwise. The tree is not an apple tree because it grows apples. The nature of the

tree determines the nature of the fruit. Conduct in one's life is as fruit upon a tree. One's Christian character determines, therefore, his conduct among men. Now, the purpose of right acts, right living all and singly, is never to save men. It is only to witness to the fact that God saves and to the result of that salvation in the life. Its purpose is to present to men a living example of a life adjusted in right relation to God, so that they will be prompted to seek God. The great Master of men, our Lord Jesus Christ, said on this question: "Let your light so shine before men that seeing your good works they may glorify your Father which is in heaven." The word "see" used by the Master carried with it a significance of "seeing to learn." That is, of "seeing through till one understands," so that we may paraphrase this great saying, "Live your life before men so that they will get back to its motive and inspiration and underlying principle of submission to God, and reenforcement through Christ, and be led to bring their own lives into harmony with His law." The old proverb declares that one may lead the horse to water, but he cannot make him drink, cannot drink for him. One may give good water, in a clean vessel, and even drink before the horse from the vessel, but he cannot slake the horse's thirst. Only the horse can do that by himself drinking of the

water provided. So no being in all the universe can slake the soul thirst of any individual human being but that being himself, as he takes of the water of life so freely offered to men in Jesus Christ the Saviour and Lord.

When one has received that inner preparation of nature for the guarantee of a right social issue to his life, he is then prepared to exert the most potent influence which this world has witnessed from man to man. Jesus uses two words to describe this influence. He tells His followers, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world." He did not mean to use the two phrases to indicate the same fact. These only seem to be different statements of the same fact. In reality they state different facts with one meaning and one motive. Both salt and light are compelled by their own nature to exert an influence—to do a work. If the salt lose its saltness, it is cast out. If the light become darkness, how great is that darkness, how hopeless that situation. The Christian man *must* exert an influence, do a work. It is a part of his life, inherent in his Christian being. It belongs to his redeemed manhood to influence other men as it belongs to the salt to be salty, and the light to be light. Keep in mind that salt is everywhere an aseptic, light an antiseptic. Salt is a preventative, light is a restorative. Christianity, as vitalized and energized in daily

living of Christian men, is therefore to be both a preventative and creative moral and spiritual power. Men have too little appreciated the content of the great crucial words with which Jesus announced the purpose of His coming into the earth. Take, for instance, the word "lost," when He said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost." There is a general, vague, indefinite conception of men who are not Christians being the lost; or perhaps it is nearer the truth to say that an indefinite thought of men who will miss the ultimate joys of heaven by some moral deficiency. In reality, the word carries with it a threefold significance. It has the idea of perishing, and is identical with the word which is used for perishable material, as for instance, the "meat that perishes." It carries with it the idea of waste, and is used by Jesus in reference to the putting of new wine into the old wine-skin, when both are lost or wasted, and it has to do with the idea of straying, as a lost sheep. Two of these significant meanings will have no meaning in the application of Christian truth unless the loss and the waste are prevented. Meat that has perished is beyond recovery. The wine-skin that has burst asunder cannot be restored and it was for this phase of the application of Christian truth that Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt is used as an aseptic to prevent the

decay of perishable material. The Gospel proposes to prevent the crowding in of corrupting influences and to preserve the new spiritual impulses that are brought with each succeeding generation, and into each new life as it comes into personal experience with the divine grace. The Christian and the Christian Church have a task, an aseptic task, with the lost world, that has to do with the whole foundation of all social purity. It has to do with the altar of God and the book of God in the Home. It concerns itself with the teachings of fundamental moral principles to the children who gather about the knee, plastic minds that are to be moulded; characters that are to be formed, and lives that are to be bent with an inclination from which they will not depart. That has also to do with the school and the Bible in it. It involves the recognition by the Christian Church that it has the right and the obligation as the dominant religious body in the body politic to give the Word of God a place, permanent and secure in its greatest and most far-reaching public institution. The aseptic conception of Christian life has to do with the juvenile court, child labour laws, public parks, wholesome conditions of play and work, with the regulation of poolrooms and drinking places for minors. It will concern itself with curfew laws and every possible form of activity in human life in which child-

hood may be saved from moral degradation and contamination; and in which childhood may find its right to normal, wholesome, clean living and thinking in the shaping of its final destiny. No Christian man can fulfil the Master's purpose in his life, nor can any Christian church or institution discharge its God-appointed obligation to society, who does not concern himself with the preservation of the integrity of the childhood of this generation. One would think that the folly of that Gospel would be at once apparent which proclaimed its mission to be simply the reclamation of that humanity which has been already despoiled of its glory, robbed of its power, and clothed with the shame of moral failure. Too much of the preaching of many of our present-day evangelists has so conceived the mission of the Gospel. It has been easier to exhort than to instruct as regards reserve energy, steadfastness of purpose, and the output of effort. It is a far simpler business to wash the grime away from some soiled sinner, than it is to keep unsullied and unstained the moral garments with which God endows in the beginning each human being. Every mother knows it is a simpler task to spend a half-hour washing and re-clothing the baby than it is to exercise that infinite patience and sweet restraint that will keep the baby out of the coal bin and the trash basket and from rolling upon

the floor. One does not belittle the necessity for a spiritual regeneration, for that necessarily belongs as truly to the morally pure as it does to the morally unclean. Saved manhood is now, as it ever has been, normal manhood, plus the re-enforcement of a God communicated nature and that plus is the "sine qua non." There is no redemptive grace in human life. But where is it said in all the range of God's revealed word that regenerative grace has to do with man only after he has become the wasted profligate? Surely we are told that it concerned itself with Nathaniel, a man without guile; with Paul, the man who, as touching the law, was perfect; with Timothy, who had been the child of faith and prayer from the hour he was first laid upon the rapturous bosom of a believing mother. The teaching of the ministry and the demands of the Church alike should send out every one of its members to undertake some personal part in the aseptic salvation of the social body.

We shall not need to divorce the Gospel from its long embraced mission. The Master who said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," also said, "Ye are the light of the world." The Gospel with an aseptic emphasis is also the Gospel with an antiseptic emphasis. One has seen what the sun does for a fog laden atmosphere, or for a fever heavy swamp. So Christian men and institutions are to affect the social

body. The Master set this forth in His parable of the tares where the struggle of the wheat is for the possession of the field against the encroachments of the evil seed of tares which the enemy had sowed in the field. He puts forth the same conception in the parable of the mustard seed and of the leaven, amplifying the conception of organic Christianity, lengthening its cords, strengthening its stakes, and making itself the militant, dominant force in the community. Here the Church and the individual Christian have their chance for activity. Here they must involve themselves in the moral phase of legislation. A. J. Diaz, preaching in Havana, Cuba, under the old Spanish Catholic régime, preached a Gospel of religious liberty. He laid emphasis upon the competency and responsibility of the individual soul in its relation to God. When the war of 1898 broke out, a thousand men of his church organized themselves into a company, came to him, and said: "Pastor, you have preached to us religious liberty. As we understand it, that involves civic liberty. We have come to you, therefore, for your blessing as we go out to fight in the army of the 'insurrectos' in the hope of obtaining our civil liberty." There is a chance for Society Women to give a godless social body an illustration of a heavenly social order. Here Christianity gets a chance at business, giving moral tone to commerce, meas-

uring its yardsticks, adjusting its balances, determining its ethics, and giving to it a necessarily altruistic principle that gives the weak a chance to live and teaches the strong to carry the burdens of their fellows. Christian faith concerns itself with arbitration treaties, catches for its fellowmen a vision of world-wide peace and sends out the citizenship of a heavenly Kingdom to write the superscription and image of the heavenly King upon the kingdoms of this earth. Its men must concern themselves with the standards of life and privileges of the law in every social club and institution where young men find their pleasures and are, alas, too often taken captive to the will of the devil. The law of God must be put upon civil and penal institutions. That is a task of the Church. They must everywhere and under all circumstances entrench men within the cities of refuge which they build and to which they invite men to come as they flee from those forces, institutions, and men who make prey upon humanity and feed upon the weakness of their fellows.

Time was when the manufacturers of silk contemptuously and carelessly flung aside every pierced cocoon. There was no known process by which the cocoon through which the worm had cut could be used at all. Yankee ingenuity, some forty years ago, devised a method by which the waste ends of the loom and waste

cocoons of the orchard might alike be used in the manufacture of a second grade of silk hardly less worthy than that which came from the use of the original and unpierced cocoon. So has Divine Wisdom ordained a means through the preaching of the Gospel and the activity of His church, by which the pierced cocoons of humanity may be made over into a new and glorious clothing for the spirit of God. Even the vilest man is to be taught that as the Spirit of God clothed Himself with Gideon and sent him down to fight with his handful of warriors against the armed hosts of Midian, so will the Spirit of God to-day clothe Himself with any man who submits himself to the divine will and empower him against all the hosts of wickedness that have arrayed themselves against him to destroy him. No man has fallen too low for the ministry of the Church. Father Damien, on his island of lepers, stands out with his human derelicts. Deaconesses and slum sisters everywhere are engaging themselves in the task, the antiseptic task which Christ committed to His own. Oh, that the Church could realize that that task is not the task of the minister or the diaconate alone, but that every individual man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, is called upon by God and man to lay his hands to this stupendous task of redeeming the world from the curse and dominion

and results of human sin as it finds its expression in suffering and sickness and sorrow in multiform varieties. The Church must go on with the business of establishing missions, building hospitals, and everywhere laying its hand, immune to sins since dipped in the blood of Christ, upon humanity's sore spots of intellect, affection, and will, until the whole social body be recovered and God be brought back to dwell with His people.

In I John 5: 19 the beloved apostle invites us up to an eminence to look down and out. The passage reads, "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the evil one, and we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding. We know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true in His Son Jesus Christ." But if one might be permitted to paraphrase that remarkable statement it should be divided into three statements and made to read on this order. "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding and the whole world lieth in the evil one. We know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true even in His Son Jesus Christ and the whole world lieth in the evil one." That is the divine perspective, ever held before the Church, a path through which it makes its way under the inspiration of God's

spirit, up to glory shining brighter and brighter ever toward the perfect day and perfect revelation. But it is a path that lies through the dark lowlands of human struggle, sin, and superstition and woe, where men in countless myriads grope in the darkness and know not that the true light has come to lighten every man back to God. One can imagine himself standing upon the top of some modern skyscraper and looking down with impersonal interest upon the struggling hosts as they are presented in panoramic view below, listening in breathless silence as the subdued roar of that composite voice of the city comes up to him. One can all but feel the throb in the veins of the great composite life as it moves and throbs and lives, a composite body of many members. But if a Christian man looks long enough he will directly become conscious of a growing conviction that his place is not upon the housetop looking down, but back in the streets following its current of life, ferreting out its secrets, uncovering and healing its sores, bringing light to its darkest recesses, and hope to its despairing souls, declaring ever the nearness of God and the fact that He is within reach of every soul that reaches out after Him.

VI

MEN AND AMBITION

OUR Lord once took occasion to define to His disciples for all time the proper confines of Christian ambition. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say that, leaving the confines of ambition limitless, He described the means of attainment when He said, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister."

Two things appear in these words of the Lord: the legitimacy of Christian ambition for pre-eminence, and the means of attainment. Ambition is not in itself an evil thing. We are all familiar with the famous words which Shakespeare has put in the mouth of Brutus in his oration over the dead body of Cæsar: "As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; and as he was valiant I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honour for his valour, and death for his ambition." As if every other thing were to be commended, and ambition alone accursed. As if every other motive for man's life actions might be mastered and controlled, while ambi-

tion alone remains a wild beast, untamable, and, therefore, to be destroyed summarily. We recall, also, the lamentable exhortation which Wolsey gives to Cromwell: "I charge thee fling away ambition; by that sin fell the angels." The implication there is that, since the angels fell by it, no man may hope to stand with it. We have come to speak of ambition, then, as an evil thing. Of course, ambition is evil when it makes self a god and brings all that life is or may possess, and lays it upon its own altar. When it becomes so selfish that to it nothing is sacred but its own desire. Such ambition as knows no purpose but its own furtherance, that makes self its centre, its life, and its goal, is surely an evil thing. But there is a holy ambition which belongs to the Christian man, and it is the purpose and province of Christianity to give men the highest ambitions. We are expressly enjoined in Colossians 3:1 following, "If ye then be risen with Christ, set your affections on the things which are above, not upon the things which are upon earth, where Christ is at the right hand of God." Such an ambition makes one aspire to a perfect and endless life; to a throne and a crown and immortality; to the noblest life here; to the largest place here in keeping with the spirit of altruistic service. One who has not his spirit quickened by ambition for the best that may be made of his life,

who does not aspire to live nobly, to work worthily, to achieve something of distinction, who has no ambition to make the most of his life and do the most with his life, may well doubt if the Christian principle has yet been realized in his life. The spirit of Jesus Christ in a man's life expands his horizon far beyond the reach of cold reason, and paints life's possibilities in colours of glowing imagination. That divine spirit within sets before every young man a ladder whose foot rests upon the earth, but whose top disappears through the open door of God's heavens above. Upon that ladder will be seen constantly angels ascending and descending, while at the top God will look down, and through its ministry he will find his life dignified and made glorious. He will see himself ever entering into possession of some promised land, from which he must drive out the baser Esau. For the realization of this dream he will need only to humble himself till he obtains the coveted gift from the hands of the Unseen Wrestler, who ever closed the way to Jacob the supplanter, confident in his own strength, but opens it wide to Israel, Prince with God and Man. The Christian man needs not to be afraid of ambition, however wild its flight, if it be chastened by the fear of God and measured by love for man, and be kept in leash by the three-fold chord of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

The Means of Attainment

Having an ambition, how shall it be realized? By what means? The ambition of the politician can be realized only by the grasp of place, the ambition of wealth only by greed, by getting and holding more money than others; but the Christian ambition can be realized only by surrendering place, by giving most, by emptying self, by blessed altruistic service. It will climb heavenward over broken hearts—healed; discouraged souls—inspired; tear-stained eyes—dried; nakedness—clothed; hunger—fed; poverty—relieved; weakness—strengthened. It will thus appear that all lies in the path of Christian ambition that is to be found in any other path, but that it is dealt with differently. Where selfish ambition breaks, Christian ambition binds. Where the one hurts, the other heals. Where the one robs, the other robes. Where one famishes, the other feeds. Where it is the province of the one to make or to disregard the hurt of humanity, it is the hope and constant aim of the other to help humanity's hurt. In the very spirit of Him who was Chiefest among men because the chiefest Servant of them all, a right ambition will aspire to bind up the broken-hearted, give liberty to the captives, and preach good tidings to the poor. It will appear that while ambition uses men, Christian

ambition is used for men. Service is the only road to Christian greatness. To be controlled by a selfish ambition is nothing less than devilish.

What the Master said here is that service is the necessary life of Christian ambition. He that would be great shall be the "*diakonos*," not as in the next verse, "*dulos*," a willing slave. Diakonos is a servant of necessity, a servant by the authority put upon him. One *must be* a servant if he would be great. Service is the appointed means of Christian greatness, and as there is only one name given under heaven among men by which they may be saved, so there is only one path under heaven by which men may cling to true greatness, the path of service. Certain fundamentals of Christian ambition may well, therefore, be considered.

Christian ambition *commands the duty of service.* It demands the making of the most of life, so that everything in life may be laid under tribute, to that end; culture, enrichment, friendship, home, business, society, all life offers. But life must be made the most of for another, not for one's self. Even Jesus pleased not Himself. He counted not His life as dear unto Himself.

> "Who lives for self, lives in vain;
> Who lives for others, lives again;
> Who lives for Christ, lives to reign."

The motive in ambition is, then, not love to self, but love to God, and its twin affection, love to man. The first call of God to men is the call for men who will serve humanity. Isaiah's vision in the year Uzziah died was of the King high and lifted up upon His throne, calling for some one whom he might send with a message from the Eternal King to His rebellious subjects. Immediately the man whose life has been cleansed by the touch of a live coal from off the altar of God cried out, "Here am I, send me." With a flash of divine intuition he saw that salvation is not for salvation's sake, but for service, and that the man who is truly saved is the man most promptly and most persistently prompted to serve. God set His seal of approval to this interpretation of the young prophet's remarkable religious experience when He said, "Go, bear the message to this people and continue to speak till there is none to hear." The word of the Old Book is, "Ye that are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak." The ever recurring obligation that God lays upon strength is the bearing of the burdens of weakness. There is no escape. From it one may not turn away his shoulders, nor his face, nor his heart, nor his life. He that would be great must minister, must serve. Not only does Christian ambition demand duty of service, it provides the occasion of service in human

need. Look about you. On every hand sorrow, sin, ignorance, poverty of mind and soul, as well as of body, heart-ache and homesickness for God. Ever as Jesus looked upon the multitude we are told that He was moved with compassion. He had His moral being stirred as by the action of some powerful tonic, and His being moved to compassion immediately resulted in His being moved to some deed of compassion. The healing of the blind, giving hearing to the deaf, the restoration of the lame, the raising of the dead, the feeding of the hungry multitude, the teaching of the ignorant crowd—all these had His stirred heart prompted, and His willing and mighty hands accomplished.

God has ordained that the service of man for man shall interpret the love of God to man. He makes the best men out of the same sort of material that we use in making radiators, not wood nor clay, but iron; that which gives out most. Years ago, as a lad upon the farm, the writer was mightily impressed with a long-continued effort on the part of the farm hands to rescue a bucket fallen into a deep well. Grappling-hooks and lines, and much patient and impatient effort, were used to no avail. After a time the old father came home and, seeing the predicament into which the servants had fallen, went into the house, secured a small hand mirror, and went out

again to the well. Lifting the mirror until it caught the sunlight, he turned it at right angles to the well, and threw the reflection of the sun into the darkness below. The whole dark, deep interior was immediately flooded with light. The illusive bucket was located, the useless grappling-irons brought into play, and within two minutes the whole loss had been repaired, and the fountain of sweet and cooling water was within reach of the thirsty people again. So Christian ambition demands that the life be kept open to catch the light and life of God, and that it be kept at right angles to the depths of human need. All effort without that illumination will be useless, a weariness of the flesh and disappointment to the soul. But when the illuminating radiance of God's love has been translated by some redeemed man into the lives of those about, occasion for service will ever be found, and that service will be made effective.

Again, Christian ambition *declares the dignity* of service. Jesus Christ would have us believe that there is nothing small about service except the spirit that apologizes for it. Being on an equality with God, He counted that not a prize to be grasped at, but emptied Himself, laid His glory aside, and took the form of a servant. The true dignity of this matchless Man stands out nowhere else so much as in the service He rendered to men. Behold Him

nurse the sick, provide food for the hungry, comfort the sorrowing, teach the ignorant multitude, rescue the abandoned, perform the menial tasks of hospitality by washing the disciples' feet, expose vice, drive out the robbers from the temple, and preach the Gospel everywhere to the hungry-hearted poor, who were hard pressed by the devil to maintain their integrity and their faith in God. There was nothing easy about all that service, nothing popular about it, nothing that seemed to make for fame or place or distinction. But in the light of after centuries it is seen to have been, and to be magnificently great. They are just the things that make men call Him God. When He had served all He could in His life He completed His serving in His death. There we stand by the last climax of His self-emptying, and say with the Roman centurion: "Truly this was a Son of God." So all men ever behold and ever measure one who follows the Lord's blessed example. There is a royal dignity in such humanity as that. There is something more than a regal, there is a divine quality in the humanity that stoops to serve, that presents itself to suffering, sorrowing, stricken men as full of grace and truth, that writes upon the tombstone of the dead the epitaph of the ever-living, "He was among us as one who served."

Again, Christian ambition *designs the daring* of service. The man who gives his life to Christian service is as one who launches his rowboat on an outgoing tide in the face of a sea-blowing wind. There is no return. It is the risk of all. Christian ambition in service contemplates the risking of all other human interests for the simple sake of self-emptying in unsought, unappreciated, unrewarded service to one's fellowman in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. There will come times when such a one can not heed even the appeals of love nor of life itself. Other ambitions must give place before this. It is said that once when W. E. Gladstone was facing one of the great crises of his ministry in the English Government, he sat writing one morning at two o'clock the speech with which he hoped to win a great political victory in the House of Commons the next day. At that hour there came to his door the mother of a poor, friendless, dying cripple, and besought him to come and bring some message of hope and cheer to the hopeless boy. Without hesitation the great Commoner left the preparation of his speech, spent the night leading the child to Christ, stayed till morning light, closed the eyes of the dead, went back to his home, and faced his day with a smile of confidence and peace and power. In that hour he said to a friend, "I am the happiest man in the world

to-day." He had been able to serve a little child in a tenement house in the name of the Master. Later he made the greatest speech of his life in the House, carrying his cause to triumphant success.

There will come times when that ambition will demand the losing of other riches. Christian service knows no necessity of commercial law. It puts His kingdom before clothes and food, according to Matthew, sixth chapter. It will demand often the sacrificing of other activities, social, political, business. Who can imagine one whose life is consecrated to the achievement of a real vital Christian ambition, manipulating a political machine, leading the foibles of a frivolous society, forgetting himself and others in the mad pursuit of money? Christian ambition will look for other rewards, risking all upon the promises of One who has said He holds a reward in His keeping for such a servant. Christian ambition counts on a voice, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the joy reserved for you." But here it will keep ever in mind the great cloud of witnesses with which it is encompassed, and laying aside every weight and the sin admired of many, will be content to run with patience the race set before it, looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despised the shame, and is now set

down at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

Once again it may be said that Christian ambition *delights in the design of service,* to revoke the curse of sin, to break the dominion of sin, to destroy the author of sin, to deny him air, a place and food and activity among men, to bind him. It purposes to establish the reign of God upon earth, to restore the throne of God in our midst, with all that this means for the individual, for the home, for society, for the State, for the world. Truly such a servant may be called a soldier who endures hardness, the veteran of many a conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, but a soldier who bears in honour now his honourable scars. In I Timothy 3:13, such a servant writes these remarkable words: "One who has served well as a servant gains to himself a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." Directly when there will be no further need he may lay aside all his armour, his sword, helmet, shield, breastplate, the girdle about his loins, and the shoes with which his feet have been shod, and then, with radiant face to the Master, announce his final surrender, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I await the crown." What God requires of a man is, that he be found faithful.

VII

MEN AND THE GREAT DEBT

JUST before His ascension, Jesus added to His great commission given in Matthew 28:20, the order of progress in the carrying out of that commission in Acts 1:8. Coupling the two together, we have, in effect, this: "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem and progressing outward to the uttermost borders of the earth." The Apostle Paul, whose spiritual development and the development of whose ministry as an apostle of Christ were commensurate with the development of his world conception of the Christian Gospel, seems to have developed according to that order of progress. His first ministerial contention was for the privilege of preaching at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17 following, and Romans 9:2-3). He next came to a vision which embraced with the Jews the Greeks also (Acts 20:21 and Romans 10:12). Then his horizon was enlarged, and he added to the Greek, the Barbarian (Romans 1:15a); and finally, to the Jew, Greek, and

Barbarian, the Roman also (Romans 1:15b). His understanding of the Gospel's power, purpose, and programme had a similar development. It was first a Gospel for Jews, then for Asia Minor, for Macedonia, and, finally, for the Roman Empire. He had come to see, on the one hand, that Christ proposes nothing less than the conquest of the whole world, for Rome embraced Jew and Greek and Barbarian, and Rome dominated the civilized world.

Again he saw that the Gospel is the one hope for the regeneration, both social and moral, of the whole world. In the letter to the Romans, we greet Paul as he faces Rome and the challenge of a great empire, a dramatic historical situation. We have in the great word which he wrote in the fifteenth verse of his first chapter of the Roman letter perhaps also the highest single expression of the Christian consciousness of obligation to give the Gospel to the whole world. A careful study of his words in the acknowledgment of that obligation will greatly and richly repay. What he said was: "I am debtor both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish, so as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you also that are in Rome." *"I am debtor, I am ready!"*

"I am debtor." I owe it as a duty, I am under moral obligation, I am bound by the

highest law. For the word "I am debtor" means to be bound by duty and bound by necessity. He gives further expression to the same thought when, in I Corinthians 9: 19, he says, "For though I was free of all men, I brought myself under bondage to all that I might gain the more." To be a debtor is to be under bondage.

Now Paul recognized this obligation as arising from many directions. We may consider that it arose from *Natural Law*. Certain relations involve certain obligations. However voluntarily the relationship may have been entered into, when once entered into it carries with it obligations which are inescapable. Marriage, though a purely voluntary bond, carries with it lasting and inseparable duties, as does citizenship. And so, in the largest and most binding way, does humanity. Paul recognizes the claim of humanity upon him as a Christian. Just being a man, a Christian man, made him a debtor to all other men as a Christian. He recognizes this expressly in his speech on Mars Hill (Acts 17: 26-27, 30). One's Christian manhood binds him by certain inherent obligations to his family, to his city, his nation, his race, his world.

God makes man a moral lever. He makes man's business that of lifting, lifting the world up to God. Man is not a debtor to birds and beasts, but to men. This final and

fundamental conception of Paul's is that, as a Christian, he is debtor to men as men, not as Jews nor Greeks, nor white nor black, nor western nor eastern, but as men. Wherever in the world there is a man, as a Christian man I owe him something; something has been entrusted to me for him. There is, then, treachery to the highest trust, the most sacred moral obligation, if I discharge not that trust.

Again, Paul's obligation, and ours, arose from the *Moral Law*. It seems that Paul recognizes an obligation to the Gentile world to bring to them God's highest gifts, because of what they had communicated by way of benefit to the world.

Greece had given the world a universal language, and that language had become the Gospel's one medium of communication, just as French in a former day and English now is spoken in every land. Everywhere a traveller may find some one speaking his own tongue. So, in Paul's day, wherever one went, Greek was the language of culture and diplomacy, the medium of linguistic exchange.

Rome had given religious liberty to the world. Any god, any religion, was tolerated in the Roman Empire. Even more than writers have generally appreciated, Christianity was indebted to Rome for the privilege of living at all. Religious toleration in Rome made it possible for the struggling new faith

to take root and send forth its shoots and branches. Rome had given far more than religious toleration. There had been erected roads which were under the safeguard of Roman authority and military patrol. Travellers might go from one end of the Roman Empire to the other as safely as they travel now upon the American railroad. The preachers of the Gospel, the wandering members of the infant Church, had an easy and safe highway of travel, and thus was the faith helped on. Both Greece and Rome had given to the world the philosophies that had all but described the boundaries of the supernatural. They had prepared the world for the Gospel of immortality, hardly less truly than had the religion of the Jews.

Moreover, the barbarians were the human material on which the Gospel could try out its message. Men of every class, every moral complexion, every social condition, were to be found in the Roman Empire. No condition of human life would be wanting in that great field for the Gospel. Now Greece and Rome had given the world their best. If one may say it, they had given the Gospel their best. Ought not the Christian minister, to whom had been communicated the divine revelation, give to them as an obligation of moral law not his best, but the best? Ought he not bring them to Christ and to eternal life?

Does not this same obligation confront the Christian Church to-day? It is quite proper to understand the Greeks as the representatives of culture and civilization, the Romans as representatives of law and order, the barbarians as all others throughout the confines of the world. Then the Christian owes a moral debt to modern representatives of ancient Greece, to the scientists, to the educators, to the wealthy and cultured, for what they have contributed and are contributing toward human progress, toward the furtherance of the Gospel; toward civilization and the amelioration of human conditions. Christianity owes to them a debt for what they are doing to make Christianity's finest progress possible, and it owes to them a debt because their best is not the best until supplemented with what the Christian has. We can never measure the obligation we owe to present-day civilization. While there are many things in its materialism and intellectualism that seem to hinder the progress of the Gospel, there can be no doubt that it has added tremendous facilities for the spread of the Gospel and has laid the Christian Church under lasting debt till that civilization is supplemented by the Gospel of Christ in the individual creeds and lives of the men who make civilization.

The barbarians are our creditors because the triumphs of Gospel grace are most apparent

among them. They are the raw material on which Christianity works in an effort to produce in human life the finished product of Christian grace. Here among the heathen of every land are the miracles of grace apparent. Two books of modern interest set forth the operations of the Gospel in widely variant conditions of human life. Professor James, in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," has revealed the evident power of the grace of God in the redemption and sanctification of some of the earth's choicest characters. In them a native nobility was enriched and empowered and equipped for service in the highest interests of God and man. Mr. Harold Begbie, in his "Twice Born Men," deals with the other end of the pendulum sweep, and reveals the redemption and sanctification of lives out of the degradation and depths of sin. The two books simply present in another way the truth of the statement that any adequate conception of the world to-day will present us with a view both of Greek and barbarian nations coming under the power and demonstration of the saving grace of the Gospel of Christ.

But we must not leave this truth as a general abstract theory. The great writer himself will not have the sense of obligation general only; he will keep that local and personal. So he uses here two other words, wise and unwise. That individualizes the whole obliga-

tion. The cultured and ignorant are involved alike in this divine obligation to give men the Gospel. How fascinating and blessed a business is it for one to bring the Gospel message to skilled, trained, cultured, appreciative thinkers, to those who fill up the full meaning of this word wise, that is, to those whose action is ordered in piety and integrity. What a joy to discharge a moral debt to those. But, alas! the unwise are the reverse of all this; coarse, hard, indifferent, they do not understand nor appreciate. They oppose self and self-interests, the appeals of this world, the demands of business, pleasure, lust, and sin to all that the preacher of the truth has to bring by way of message from God. How hard it is, only one who has tried it may know, to keep the Christ attitude toward these dull and brutish souls. There is constant temptation to turn away from them with contemptuous disdain; to repudiate obligation because of conditions, and to make their rejection of the Gospel personal matter between them and us. But if we catch the vital significance of the divine commission, we must realize that the Christian is to have one attitude toward all, and must face in himself a moral failure of the highest sort if he does not pay his debt. A generation or two ago a young medical missionary, ready to go out to the foreign field at the evident call of God, wooed and won an

attractive Christian girl, and obtained her promise of marriage. But when he came to demand the fulfilment of the betrothal vows, her father withheld his consent except on the condition that they should remain in America. The young missionary gave up his purpose, married, remained in America, and grew tremendously rich. It seemed that the hand of God was upon him in favour. Whatever he touched prospered. But when an old man, ready for the other world, he said to a friend in tremulous tones: "Upon the day I gave my consent to remain at home, peace went out of my heart never to return."

Finally, this obligation arises from the Law of Grace. The Christian man is a man of spiritual superiority over his fellows. Is that not what Paul means in the verses preceding the immediate passage under consideration, when he says, "For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that you may be established. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I proposed to come unto you, but was hindered, hitherto, that I might have some fruit among you also even as among other Gentiles"? He embodies the same exhortation also in his second letter to Corinthians 6: 1— "We then, as workers with Him, beseech you

also that you receive not the grace of God in vain." In vain is to no purpose, or, again, it means to be destitute of spiritual wealth, that is, to remain destitute. Let us try again for a definition; in vain means empty-handed, without a gift. So, what this divinely inspired man seems to be driving at in that exhortation is an urgent warning that the Corinthian Christians were not to take the grace of God without a gift, without something in return. Shall we dare to receive grace, without immediately beginning the discharge of the debt which that grace makes binding upon us?

I have read somewhere that, in the exposures of the Tweed corruptions in New York City a generation ago, George W. Jones, the editor of a New York daily, was offered the sum of five million dollars to cover up certain information he had. He declared that the price was too small for his soul. He held it to be his bounden duty to reveal to his community the presence and corrupting influence of the bad. No right-thinking citizen will disagree with him for a moment. But it will be a very much more difficult matter for Christian citizens to see the converse of that truth. For, if one is a debtor to declare the bad, how much more is he bound to reveal the good? How many Christian men are permitting the devil to buy them off from their debt to man and God with a sop of sin, with the red

pottage of pleasure, with a morsel of money. The call is insistent, the duty imperative. Let us face it as men of the Kingdom should.

There can be only one right attitude toward this obligation, "I am ready, as far as in me lies." To the man who first penned those words, they meant the final surrender of a great mind, the outgoing of a great heart, the abandonment to service of the most conspicuous personality that ever wrought for the uplift of the human race. It meant the giving of zeal, time, mind, and speech, a wide and accurate knowledge of the Greek language, a comprehensive understanding of the ancient Scriptures, the first-hand knowledge through contact as a traveller of the whole world. Gladly he gave all.

What would it mean to you? God help us to be done forever with the measuring of obligation by the standard of money. We shall give that, for we must, but shall we continue to measure our obligation to give the world the Gospel of the Lord Jesus by the pennies or the pounds, the dollars or the cents that we may be able or willing to fling into His treasury? To be ready means to be willing, with a passion to which is given preference. It does not forbid other passions, other human desires, even for pleasure, for the making of money, for the achievement of a place and reputation among men. But it does mean

that foremost among all the passions of desire shall be that of giving the Gospel to the lost world. The word means a passion that arises quickly and subsides quickly, as under special appeal. That is its primary meaning, but there is a secondary meaning, and a far more significant meaning, attached to the word *ready* here. For it is a passion arising gradually and settling into an abiding conviction that controls and directs the energies and activities of the whole life. Nothing less than that can adequately move the Christian man in his contemplation of an abiding and universal obligation to bring the Gospel to all men.

VIII

MEN AND THE KING'S TRIBUTE

PERHAPS money is the highest secondary interest of human life. It is the first question in matters of labour, business, investments, society, and politics. Often, also, men make it the supreme secondary question in their religious life. It is an unsightly and dangerous question to every one whose spiritual tide is flowing out. As one travels up from Washington City to New York, he will be impressed variously by the shore line, according as the tide is in or out. If the tide be out, there is just a long line of unsightly shore, strewn with débris. But if the tide be in, there is a long line of beautiful bays and estuaries and inlets, whose placid calm suggests all the questions and reflects all the mystery of the mighty ocean without. So are the lives of men; if the spiritual tide be high, then the most practical and commonplace matters of life take on a beauty and glory. Temporal and spiritual blessing is assured to those who are right with God, and every temporal as well as spiritual question brings joy to the man who

has rightly adjusted his relation to God and man. The law of honesty has a far wider application than man's simple relation to his friends. Honesty between man and man, as defined in God's law, embraces these: taking another's possessions direct; usury; overreaching; oppressing the hireling in his wages. Honesty with God has only one question involved, that of tithing. The men of the Kingdom need, therefore, earnestly, to learn the will of God on this question. It is unquestionably true that His ancient people Israel came under the curse because they robbed God in the matter of their tithes. It is undeniably true, also, that multitudes of His people today are under a spiritual blight because of their niggardliness and dishonesty as regards the King's Tribute.

The Law of the Tithe

The divine law of man's gifts of money in worship can not be understood, till we consider ourselves as subjects of the King and citizens of His Kingdom. The King's money involves two items, tribute and free-will offering; what we ought to give to the support of the Kingdom by virtue of our citizenship in it, and the gifts we bring prompted by love to the King. In America there is frequent illustration of this principle, when some wealthy

citizen, after paying his taxes to the City and the commonwealth, moved by generous public spirit, gives, as a benefaction to the City, a park or hospital or public building. No one ever feels, however, that his giving a public benefit ever relieves him of the payment of his taxes as a citizen. In our human law, one who avoids his taxes or falsifies about them is subject to penalty. In God's law, also, he is a robber. Malachi 3:7-9, "From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse, for ye rob Me, even this whole nation."

The Law of the King's Tribute

The law of the King's tribute embraces:

I. The law governing the tribute (Leviticus 27:30-33), "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is Jehovah's; it is holy unto Jehovah. And if a man will redeem aught of his tithe he shall add unto it the fifth part thereof. And all the tithe of the herd or flock, whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth

shall be holy unto Jehovah. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he change it at all, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed."

II. The use of the tribute money (Numbers 18:21-24), "And unto the children of Levi, behold I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, even the service of the tent of meeting. And henceforth the children of Israel shall not come nigh the tent of meeting, lest they bear sin, and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations; and among the children of Israel, they shall have no inheritance. For the tithe of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave-offering unto Jehovah, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore, I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance." As we would say to-day, it is to be used for the support of the pastors, missionaries, ministerial education, and the training and equipment of Christian workers.

III. The direction (Deuteronomy 12:5-8, and 11), "But unto the place which Jehovah your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation

shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come; and thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and the heave-offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your free-will offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock; and there ye shall eat before Jehovah your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." "Then it shall come to pass that to the place which Jehovah your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offerings of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto Jehovah."

The reason for the Biblical insistence upon bringing the tithe into the storehouse lies probably in the fact that co-operative work has a mighty cumulative power. What a hundred men may do each with his dollar, directing his own gifts, is a very small matter when compared with what a hundred men might do with their dollar, if the dollars should be brought together and be directed according to the combined wisdom and counsel of the hundred, or a representative committee of them. So God binds man's tenth, the small gifts of

the many, to the temple, the place of common worship, that He may enhance the money's value and multiply its power. That was true in the ancient day. It is true to-day. The old habit of each worshipper slipping something into the preacher's hand for his support, left the preacher forever on the ragged edge, and has rightly given place to the co-operative method, in which the union of gifts and the counsel of givers assures the minister a uniform salary and a steady support. Buying on the installment plan is an expensive business. The minister who can not buy otherwise because of an uncertain and a meagre support, must of necessity buy upon installment and upon time, if he buys at all, and will constantly run the risk of his own good name and that of his church by way of debt. It would seem, also, that the same arguments would hold about that plan of mission enterprise known as Gospel missions. It is not the plan endorsed by the acknowledged wisdom of men or the inspired wisdom of God.

Careful study will reveal three things regarding the tithe as ordained of God. He claims as His own the tithe of all the possessions of His people. This tithe is to be used solely in the support of religious worship and the ministry. It is to be brought to the one common centre of worship. The distributing centre must be God's storehouse, the

treasury of the King. Its administration is not to be determined by what seems right in every man's sight.

There are certain subterfuges behind which men hide in an effort to disregard this plain and imperative command of the King. They tell the King that they can not afford it. They seem never to consider whether they can afford to be disobedient to God. For God commands the gift of the tithe. Can one afford to be dishonest? The tithe of all is God's money, not our own, and the Eternal God calls it robbery, and robbery of God, when His men withhold that tithe. Again men often say, I must pay my honest debts. Let him tell the State that as an excuse for not paying his taxes.

The tithe is the first and most binding debt of man. Remember that it is not a privilege, it is a duty, a debt, a God-imposed obligation. The man who puts his debts between him and his duty simply conforms to a sinful mode of life, for he is living contrary to that law of Christ, "Owe no man anything." The uniform testimony of men who tithe their income constantly is that it is easier to keep out of debt after paying God the first tenth of the income than it is by using it all selfishly upon one's own interests. The man who thus argues that he ought to pay his debts before he pays his tithe will be found directly making

debts in order to avoid the payment of his tithe. God demands the firstfruits, not of the net, but of the gross, income of His people. The excuse, "I can not tell what my income is, in order to tithe it," is so evidently untrue, so palpably a mere excuse, that it hardly needs to be refuted soberly. Perhaps more subtle is the devil's suggestion that charity begins at home. Many of God's children are being persuaded of the devil that the maintenance of needy, or dependent loved ones, is a proper use of the Lord's tithe. Two considerations force themselves upon one. The tithe is not charity. God has ordained that it should be used for the maintenance of His worship and His ministry, and nothing else. Again, the care of one's own is not charity. He who does not provide for his own is declared by the inspired Apostle to be worse than an unbeliever. Probably the only reason for a disregard of the plain and imperative command of God concerning the tithe is that men are not willing to obey God's law. Fear, greed, unreasoning stubbornness, and self-will, prevent multitudes from binding their lives to the heavenly yoke and bringing their lives within the zone of heavenly blessing.

It is sometimes objected that tithing was a law of the Jews, and, therefore, a law confined to the Jews. But if this law is confined to the Jews, then all the laws of God are confined

to the Jews. For to them belong first the oracles of God; to them, and through them, came the inspired Scriptures out of which has come their permanent revelation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Lord of the World. The same Scriptures that teach justice, mercy, and faith, and the love of God, distinctly teach and couple with these the universal law of tithing. It was a law far antedating the establishment of a Jewish nation and the giving of a Jewish law. Abraham, as well as Moses, came under the law of the tithes. Melchizedec and Jesus are conspicuous examples of men of a universal character and kinship, obeying, and commanding obedience to this law of God.

Mr. Harry Whitcomb declares there are three essential laws concerning the tithe: 1, "God's absolute ownership in the tithe, 'The tithe is the Lord's' (Leviticus 27:30); 2, the sacred character of the tithe, 'It is holy unto the Lord' (Leviticus 27:30); 3, it must be brought into the storehouse, the place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there (Deuteronomy 12:5 and Malachi 5:3-10)." One other law needs to be added. The giving is to be systematic and regular upon the first day of the week. "Let each one of you lay by in store according as God has prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:1). We must pay the tithe, we do not give it. It is a debt, not an offering. It is

duty, not privilege. Stewardship does not begin until after the tithe has been paid. The tithe is the Lord's; He has directed its use and its direction. Man has no choice in the matter. Abundant illustrations might be adduced to both these lessons. They could be made to show unquestioned reality of God's blessing upon the obedient and His blight upon the disobedient. One will, perhaps, suffice. Dr. Chadwick, formerly of Oxford Place Chapel, Leeds, England, tells of two men in his church who formed a partnership and agreed to give God the tenth of their income. While their income was small, they kept to this vow, and their business prospered amazingly. Soon, however, they began to take account, not of the proportion of the gifts, but of the amount absolute. It seemed so large to them that they began to hedge and withhold, and then God took away their prosperity, and, finally, left them practically without business. They were brought first to see and then confess their dishonesty, and, pledging themselves to future obedience, the blessing of God was restored, and business again prospered. Whatever one may say of the temporal blessings that come attendant upon obedience to the law of the tithe, it may be confidently said that no case has ever been put on record where any servant of God who regularly tithed his income became a backslider. Christian liberal-

ity and spiritual enrichment go hand in hand, living in holy wedlock in the same soul.

Doubtless Paul had in mind the law of the tithe when he wrote to the Church of Ephesus (Ephesians 4:28), "Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need." Here he furnishes a motive for all labour, and lifts the question of giving money to a higher plane than that of simple honesty with God.

The Challenge of Christian Privilege

Here, as elsewhere, Christian privilege becomes imperative Christian duty, and duty becomes high privilege. It is no wonder that he urges the Corinthian Church that, since they abound in faith and hope and love, they should see to it that they abound in the grace of giving also. The fourth chapter of Ephesians binds the grace of liberality to an ever godly company. It makes it of one family with truth and love and chasteness of speech and kindness to others and a forgiving spirit in the face of offense and with harmony of the Holy Spirit, and urges that the Christian's liberality should be worthy of the company it must keep in his life. Perhaps no other message is so needed by the Church to-day as this

message concerning the King's tribute. Other things are vastly more important to the men of God's Kingdom than that they should open an interest-bearing bank account. Achan began a bank account at Jericho which defeated Israel at Ai. Ananias and Sapphira opened a private bank account in Jerusalem which put them in their graves and caused great fear to fall upon the entire Church.

A selfish, stingy man can not be a Christian. A man with an itching palm can neither hold nor wield the sword of the Spirit in the conquest of God's Kingdom. The love of money is the root still of all kinds of evil, and he who would have riches, spreads a snare for his soul, falls into many hurtful lusts, and runs eminent risk of the loss not only of his soul, but his life and his hope of eternal blessedness. One may not receive the grace of God in vain, that is, empty-handed, without some gift in return (II Corinthians 6: 1).

Free-Will and Special Offerings

So far duty, now privilege. When one has completed his obedience to the law of the tithe he may enter the open door of the privilege of giving. There are special laws covering free-will and special offerings. There are gifts to the poor (Leviticus 23: 22), " And when ye reap the harvest of your land thou

shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of the harvest; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the sojourner; I am Jehovah your God" (Deuteronomy 14:28), "At the end of every three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase in the same year, and shall lay it up within thy gates."

There is a special law covering miscellaneous gifts (Leviticus 23:37-38), "These are the set feasts of Jehovah, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice and drink offering, each on its own day; besides the sabbaths of Jehovah and besides your gifts and besides all your vows and besides all your free-will offerings which ye give unto Jehovah." One may do as he will about these, but he disregards the law of the tithe in peril to his own soul and jeopardy to the whole forward movement of the Kingdom of God in the earth. "Take heed, brethren, less haply there should be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God." "Let us fear, therefore, less haply a promise being left of entering into His rest any one of you should seem to have come short of it."

IX

MEN AND THE FORGOTTEN BOOK

THE Bible is a forgotten, and, therefore, an unknown book. Yet this book is the universal treasure house of inspiration and instruction and warning in things spiritual and practical for the souls of men. Taken as literature alone, it is unsurpassed in charm and beauty of style. Ruskin, whose English prose is a model of prose composition, has borne feeling testimony to its influence in his life and writings. It still furnishes, after the lapse of all the centuries, the finest example of law known to civilization. Indeed, all the laws regulating the morals of human society are based finally upon those laws written on tables of stone in Mt. Sinai.

One may question, also, without apology, whether science has gotten beyond the dogmatic statements of the old book. It certainly may be said with all emphasis that there is now no conflict between the real declarations and final conclusions of scientific investigations, and the Mosaic statements of the Pentateuch. Science may properly be described as man's

best guess at what may have been the origin and order of things at the beginning. To one who believes in the Old Book, there is often profound relief in turning from the guesses of men to the simple assertions of the Scriptures. One feels that there is, and can be, no more satisfactory statement of the origin of the material order than that contained in Genesis. The boasted teachings of modern science on questions of sex and house sanitation, of hygiene and social segregation, have not outstripped in matter or in manner the teachings of the ancient Leviticus. The details of sex sanitation are worked out in Leviticus as accurately as in any modern text-book, and with less suggestiveness and with as perfect comprehensiveness.

The Bible is a book of poetry, of music, and of architectural art. No better school of modern business standards or method can be found than the Book of Proverbs. As often as men have turned away from it, have tried out their own plans, boasted their own wisdom, they have been forced at last to turn back for guidance and solace and teaching to this primal fountain. It is the one moral ocean from which all vapours of thought are lifted, and to which all streams of thought must inevitably return.

Why, then, is the Old Book neglected? Two reasons certainly lie at the foundation

of that neglect. Here at least are two of the fundamental reasons to be discovered in America. Other reasons are given. One is often told that the Bible is neglected because of the rush and hurry in which men live, of the overwork, of the absorption in business; because of the corruption of modern society, because of the low and materialistic ideals of men everywhere. Rather are these the results than the cause of neglect. For it is still true, after the lapse of centuries, " where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint " (Proverbs 29: 18). The two reasons suggested here are, of course, not all the reasons that might be found, but they are indicative of modern tendencies in church life. First, then, the Christian world has been cursed with the Bible-school lesson leaflet, in the hands of immature and untrained women teachers. To this has been added gradually, but quite naturally, a mania for entertainment in teaching. Here is quite a prolific cause for every form of false, foolish, and hurtful interpretation of the truth. The aim of the teacher has had its emphasis too often in the effort to attract and hold the largest possible number of children. This effort is projected forward into the adolescent age. Almost every modern method in Bible-school work has tended toward a cheapening of the Word of God. It has been handled with that familiarity which in-

evitably breeds contempt. The lesson leaflet itself containing the only Scripture in the hands of the student is a thing so cheap as to be easily and without reproof discarded, thrown upon the ground, trampled under foot. Even when in the hand, the emphasis upon the study has been not upon the text, but upon things written about the text in the leaflet. Surely it is not a stretch of the imagination to see that this handling of the Word of God must have a mighty reflex, though, perhaps, unconscious influence, upon one's whole attitude toward that Word. It is not strange, then, that the present generation of churchmen are largely indifferent to the Word of God; nor that they have largely discarded that Word as the final authority by which their daily lives must be regulated. There needs to be raised in every church the cry, "Back to the Book." If it is to be taught in a school of the Bible, then let the Book itself be taught. Let there be strong insistence that the Book shall be brought to the classroom, that it shall be handled with reverence, and treated with honour and preserved with care. Let its great, old, stately sayings touch, with their life-giving inspiration in first-hand contact, the hearts and minds and lives of the new generation of youth. Let it not be understood at all that this is an effort to undermine, or in any way attack the Bible-school. It is only a deliberate

challenge to the present Bible-school method of handling the Word itself. There can be no serious doubt but that the situation in which the Church is involved as regards the Word of God demands, also, a high order of teaching and, consequently, a higher order of teachers. It is a crime to commit the teaching of a Book which has challenged the profoundest wisdom and the most studious care of the great scholars and ripest saints of the ages into the hands of half-grown, immature schoolgirls. At least let the opportunity and responsibility for teaching it challenge the interest and attention of men. Men train themselves for every other business in life, while no other business is to be compared to the business of moulding character and determining the conduct of the youth of a generation through the exposition and application of the truths of God's Word. Its results will outlast the results of any business or political activity in which men engage their lives. It challenges the conscience to give at least a part of the time to training and equipment for teaching the Bible to the boys and young men who gather in our churches to study it. By this means to a very large degree the Bible may be rescued from its present neglect. While the spectacular features of national joy attendant upon the discovery of the long-lost law under the reign of King Josiah in Israel may be absent,

there will be no less truly a revival of knowledge and power and happiness in a new possession of this forgotten source of all moral, domestic, social, and national strength.

But another cause has been a large contributor to this neglect. The pulpit has substituted the preaching of theology for the preaching of the Word. It is still in vain for men to teach their precepts in the place of the inspired Word of God. The Church has suffered fiercely and fearfully through an age of theological debate and homiletics. The fierce theological contentions of the schoolroom and forum force themselves naturally, perhaps, but surely into the pulpit, until a minister's orthodoxy has come to depend upon his adherence to a system of theology. Now the New Testament, to which the ministers must ever turn for their commission, mission, and material, presents no system of theology. The theology may be there, but the system is absent, and if one thing may be more readily discovered than another in the New Testament, it surely would seem to be that the minister is not commissioned to preach a system of theology or of truth, but to declare simply a story of One who was numbered among the transgressors, and who is presented as the Saviour of men from their sins. The initial departure having been made in the pulpit from the Scripture method of expository preaching,

each succeeding step in the path away has been easy to take. There is a recognized ministerial craze for popularity, evidenced in discourses embellished with literature, science, and art; and the pagan lore of the centuries. Success as a preacher has been held to be demonstrated when the preacher gathered about him a crowd, and his failure is a foregone conclusion when his crowd is gone. All this in the face of the fact that even Paul, the greatest theologian and preacher of his and of all the centuries, with all his learning and qualifications, coupled with the tremendous sensation of the new story he had to tell, and with the fact that he worked under the immediate inspiration and miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit—even Paul was never able to maintain praise or popularity in one place for more than three years. This is no arraignment of the ministry. Rather it is a sincere effort to expose a false method into which there has been a constant tendency to drift. There is encouragement in the belief that the present age is beginning to turn to that ancient and ever-effective method of preaching the truth known as expository preaching. Surely it would seem that the preacher's first task is to break light out of the Word of God into the lives of men, so that they may find constant and daily illumination for the perplexing questions and conflicting tasks with

which their paths are filled. Men have a right to demand of their only religious teachers and leaders, clear, definite, simple, and profound teaching. The minister should be apt to teach. Men are certainly ready to be taught.

The present task of men who know and love the truth is to bring men and the Bible into touch, each with the other. The entrance of God's Word gives light. That Word, hidden in the heart, will keep from sin. An old German in a company of believers told in broken English how, in his youth, he had been taught the Scriptures. He then wandered away into sin, and for many years continued in his neglect of God and of His Word. Then, pausing for a moment, he said with deep feeling, "But, brethren, after thirty years, those beautiful words woke up." Their waking had transformed his life and brought him out of darkness into light, even the marvellous light and liberty of the Son of God.

The first step in this task is to accept and stand by the Bible as it is. Criticism has done its best and its worst upon the Book which has emerged out of that fire of intellectualism, as came the three Hebrew children out of the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar without so much as a smell of the fire upon them. Christian men need to be done with apologies for the Bible in declaring it to be the Word of God, final, authoritative in the lives of men. There

should be constant and unfailing effort to induce men to read the Bible itself rather than to read about the Bible. So long as men are content to read what other men have said about the Bible, they will continue to live only a second-hand religion. But men must not only be taught to read, they must be taught to read intelligently. Therefore, Christian men must sacrifice whatever of time or business is needed, to be trained as teachers. Therefore men must be gathered into Bible classes, where the constant insistence shall be upon the expository presentation of the illuminating Word itself.

Another step in the way of return to the knowledge of and reverence for the forgotten Book, lies in the return to the ancient custom of daily family worship with the man who is at the head of the family, leading. Religion is a man's job. The man who is at the head of any household is not true to his high obligation as the head of his family, till he responds to its moral demand for religious leadership there. He must be priest, preacher, example, and leader for his own household, if he would discharge the primal and simplest obligation of his domestic life.

Protestant Christianity must insist, also, upon the restoration of the Bible to, and preservation of the Bible in the public schools of America. This country owes too much to

the Bible and its teachings ever to discard it from its system of public-school education. Its ten laws lie at the basis of all American legislation. Its Sabbath, Jewish or Christian, has been the one great American day. Its conception of woman, marriage, and home has been the foundation of that social and domestic integrity of which our national life has been justly proud, and in which that national life has been preserved. Its exalted valuation of human life has been the one hope of order and the one restraint of greed and lust, in a nation whose youth and inexperience have prepared an open field for every form of vice and moral confusion.

Manifold opportunities present themselves for the extension of Bible-study groups into shops, factories, and upon ships, and the organization of Bible-study clubs in homes.

But there are infinite difficulties. This is no easy task. On the one hand, materialism and commercialism have gripped the masses of the people by the heart. There is no time to study. The pursuit of money, slavery to business, the weariness of labour, the grind of the daily toil, the immersion of the mind, the very soul, in the tasks of the daily life, all these are at war with any systematic, continued, appreciative study of such a book as the Bible. On the other hand, modern intellectualism is at war with the Bible. Other books, the cheap novel,

every one with its gospel, the multiplication of magazines *ad infinitum;* the daily newspapers with their cheap sensations, have sapped the interest and undermined belief in the Book of all books with its message of all messages. The whirl of modern amusement, picture show and theatre, picnic and party; the diseased and overwrought social demands of every community are all foes to Bible study.

Finally, the coldness and unworthiness of the Christian zeal of the great mass of professed Christians who have permitted the Bible to become a theory to be cherished in profession, but neglected in practice, make an almost impassable barrier. A Korean convert, who had committed to memory the entire Gospel of Matthew, in offering explanation of how he was able to do it, said: "I had great difficulty in making the text stick, but one day I decided that as I read it and tried to commit it to memory, I should practise it verse by verse upon my neighbours, and I found that, as I practised it, somehow it stuck." May we not believe that this Korean convert has found for us all the real method of promoting a new love for, and a new power through the Word of God? May we not pray, also, that his discovery, adopted into the general life of the Christian Church, shall put men again to the blessed task of restoring the Book to its rightful place in the hearts and hands and homes of men?

X

THE GLORY OF THE COMMONPLACE

JESUS, entering upon His ministry, had three great temptations set before Him. In each case the temptation made appeal in His life to one familiar fact in the lives of men to-day. They were all temptations to the spectacular. Another has said that the three temptations were a temptation to over-confidence, a temptation to under-confidence, and a temptation to other-confidence. This is a fine analysis and definition of the wilderness struggle of our Lord with the devil. But back of each was the appeal to self-exploitation. The first, the temptation to make the bread from the stones, was a temptation to amaze Himself and belonged purely to His present. The second, the temptation to seize the dominion of the world by the mere expedient of worshipping Satan, who claimed to have possession of the world, was a temptation to spectacular splendour in the coming days. The temptation to fling Himself from the pinnacle of the temple was the climax of all, and combined an appeal both to present and future splendour of personal appearance. It was a bid for the

mightiest sensation, for popularity by means of a tremendous public excitement over an unheard-of exploit. Thus in all three the underlying thought seems to be, "display your powers, display riches, display yourself."

This peculiar temptation followed Him throughout His ministry. The Pharisees were constantly upon His step, dogging His way with the demand, "Show us a sign." "By what authority doest Thou these things?" Give us some singular and spectacular and sensational display of Your heavenly commission that we may believe on You. Even upon the cross, they wagged their heads in His direction and sagely said, "Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe on Him. Let Him create one more sensation, more spectacular and splendid than anything yet done. Let Him feed our souls with the morbid, with the unusual. That will compel faith." One is constrained to believe that they spoke the truth in a measure. Had He fed them on sensation, they could have believed in Him while the sensation lasted. Had the sensation been spectacular enough, they might even have been swept off their feet and crowned Him King, committing themselves to Him so definitely, and finally, that the future would have found no place for their disaffection.

The answer of Jesus seems to have been in effect uniformly this: "Believe Me for My

own sake. Yield to the persuasion of My personality. Let the grace and truth with which My life are filled make their legitimate appeal to you as they have made their appeal to My disciples. Come to Me. Hear My teachings. Take hold of My Gospel. Yield to My influence. Accept My revelation. Discard the appeal to the senses and be persuaded to attach yourselves to My person." When He saw they could not or would not do that, He seems to have made a concession as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of John, when He said, "Believe Me for My work's sake; if not for My own sake, then for My work's sake." It was thus He answered John when he sent his disciples to ask, "Art Thou the Christ or shall we look for another?" "Tell John," said He, "what you see and hc The blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dead are raised to life again." The ordinary tasks of His daily routine were the things to which He appealed for commendation to the conscience, judgment, and credence of men.

Jesus was not only the Saviour of men, but He was the typical, representative man. He was tempted in all respects like as we are, with this one essential difference, that He did not yield to His temptations. It is natural to presume that what was His chiefest and most persistent temptation is a common temptation of

man. What logic premises, experience proves. Our common temptation is to work in the limelight, to be seen of men; to advertise ourselves while doing our work, and ever ignore the glory of the commonplace. There is a striking illustration of this in the case of Naaman the Syrian, who, when he was to be healed of his leprosy, arranged the most spectacular setting possible for his cure. Notice the steps in his progress of departure from Syria to seek the physician of Canaan. He makes formal request of the King. He gathers about him a great retinue. He makes a splendid departure from his own land. He comes with great pomp to the Court of the King of Israel, and with spectacular magnificence presents his master's request; his own request, which was an ultimatum from his master. When directed to go down to the house of the prophet Elisha, he came with his chariot and retinue and stood before the prophet's gate. As he afterward revealed, he thought that the prophet would come down to him. But the prophet sent simply a message, "Go down to Jordan and dip seven times," and then the great Syrian became extremely angry. He could not afford to have a private cure; he could not afford to be dealt with as an ordinary man, and he cries in his rage, "I thought he would at least come down to me and wave his hand over the place and speak words and I

should be cured." The desire for pre-eminence and for exploitation was in his heart, even greater than the desire for health.

Again we find an illustration of the same impulse in the way the Thessalonians received Paul's message concerning the return of the Lord Jesus. They seemed to have missed entirely the great fundamental facts of that glorious hope. They did see the sensational and spectacular. So directly Paul is informed, while he tarries at Athens, that the Thessalonians have given up work. Even the women have ceased to stay at home to care for the children and look after the house. All together they now paraded the streets so as to catch the first glimpse of the spectacular breaking through the clouds by the soon to be expected Master. Paul writes them a second letter, in which he says: "That is not the way to realize the presence of Christ, nor to be ready for His return. Men always realize the personal presence of the Son of God by the patient performance of the routine duties of the daily life. So," said he, "get back to your business. Return to your homes. Discharge the commonplace duties with which your every-day life is filled. Be not slothful in business, be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Let the women keep at home, train their children, discharge the obligations of the household. Thus will His presence be realized even now, and

thus will we meet Him when He does come, without shame of neglected duties." John the Believer warns the Christian body in their conduct with worldly society against the vain glory of life and love of the world. These are the things that undermine and subtly dissipate the spiritual forces of life.

But if there is a temptation to the spectacular prevalent everywhere and familiar to all men, there is likewise a temptation of the commonplace, but we see it only on the reverse side of the shield. The temptation of the commonplace lies in its familiarity. We are told by the poet that

> "Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen.
> But seen too oft, familiar with its face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

An old adage, from childhood up, has told us that "familiarity breeds contempt." One temptation of the commonplace lies in our familiarity with it. We know it too well. We have seen it too often. We are persuaded that the commonplace has no possibilities. The prophet has no honour in his own country. He may be ever so great abroad, he may be the foremost citizen of his land, but his village will look upon him as a boy, and to them he never loses that familiarity which goes with the use of a Christian name and with the intimacy and association of immaturity. "Is

not this Jesus?" said His contemporaries. "Are not His brethren and sisters among us?"

Ah, how long commonplace blessings wait at our doors to be discovered. Twenty years ago, or a bit more, the grape-fruit, so delightfully luscious and so popular everywhere in America to-day, was discarded in Florida, spurned as an utterly valueless incumbrant of the ground. The most delightful fruit tonic of that sunny clime was ruthlessly carted out by the wagon-load and fed to the swine. It has not been longer than that since the ban of contempt and undervaluation has been lifted from the cotton seed. It was good for nothing save to fertilize the land, or, with limitations, to feed the stock on the plantations of the South. All that is changed. It is now used for food and fertilization, but it is also used as a substitute for swine fat, and is more and more being rated as a great commodity of the modern markets.

Men rarely ever see in their own church the magnificent possibilities dormant there. We are constantly permitting our young men to grow up and go to waste. We pray for experts and look for great men when God has made them and put them at our hands, and only waits for us to have sense enough to develop them. And yet we ever go on, yielding to that temptation to ignore the commonplaces

because the commonplace is familiar to us.

The second temptation of the commonplace lies in its nearness. Some years ago, two men were standing upon a peak of the Alps, one of them going into rhapsodies over the splendid glory of that all but matchless scenery. When he had finished one of the songs he was singing, his companion said to him: "Did you ever climb to the top of the Arsenal in Springfield, Massachusetts, and catch the vision of loveliness that lies out on every hand there before you from that eminence? In my judgment, there is nothing in the Alps that surpasses the glory of that view." In utter amazement the first man turned to his companion and said: "No. I have lived in Springfield all my life, but it never occurred to me to look for the beauty that lies around my own door." How entirely true to human nature that is. We travel thousands of miles, brave the dangers of the sea and land, leave the comforts of home, to go into ecstasy over a bit of beauty, the equal of which we might have had for a five minutes' walk. It was ever thus among men. Moses was chosen of God to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt into the promised land. God spoke to him out of a bush of chaparral, which he had doubtless passed a hundred times before that day, and had seen in it no possibilities. Moses raised two or three objections to going over, after

God had spoken to him, and they are very humiliating to our common experience. His first objection was: "I am nobody. Who am I? I am not great, I am not equal to this task; why, I am just I." His second objection was: "I am not eloquent, I am not a great speaker, send some one else, anybody but me. I know myself too well. I am not equipped. I have not the prestige, I have not the wisdom, I know not how to undertake this great task. With what shall I go? How shall I do?" Then God, out of infinite wisdom and the resources of His omnipotence, said: "Moses, what is that in your hand?" and Moses, looking down, while the light began to dawn upon his soul, said, with the simplicity of a great understanding, "It is a rod!" God said: "With that rod, you shall go down to Egypt. Change it into a serpent as you cast it upon the ground; lift it by the tail and rechange it into a rod. Know that God, with the infinite resources of His wisdom and power, is with you and behind you in this project. The most commonplace thing in your life is the thing which God will use in your hands for a great victory and a great deliverance." So Moses took the rod in his hand and went forward. He leaned upon it before Pharaoh's great throne. He walked with it before Israel's shepherdless hosts. He stretched it out over

the turbulent and repulsive waters that barred his way in the Red Sea, and depended upon it as he climbed his weary way upon the lofty heights of Nebo and gave back to God, who had commissioned him, this the only insignia of office with which God had equipped him in the beginning.

Men are ever feeling:

> "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
> And robes the mountain in its azure hue."

Religious opportunity lies in the thing or person nearest at hand, usually. Your neighbour is the man who waits to have you win him to Christ. Your block in the city will doubtless furnish you ample opportunity for effective service. It may be that your own home will provide the most enriching, the most fascinating field, for the exercise of those activities so much exploited under the present-day titles of "Boys' Work." The one mission field to which God calls you above all others for prayer and gifts and the active exercise of personal energy and service may lie in the slums of your city. For missions are but the expression of personal evangelism. Evangelism at home is missions abroad, and missions abroad are evangelism at home. Remember it was in a bush of the desert that Moses met God, and the significant statement is made concerning that bush that "when

Moses turned aside to see, God spoke to him out of the bush."

There is a glory in the commonplace if men had eyes to see it and hearts to find it. There is a rather amusing illustration of this fact in one of the stories connected with the life and adventures of the Old Testament hero, Samson. He had long devastated the country and violated the rights of his neighbouring enemies, the Philistines. He had broken their ropes, defied their laws, and taken the gates off the hinges of their jails; had laughed at their punier personal powers. One day a thousand of them came upon him out in the open plain. It was clearly a case where the odds were all against him. He was not quicker to see that than they were, and, raising a great hue and cry, they immediately set upon him, determined to beat him down by sheer force of numbers. Samson was unarmed. It was evident that he could not handle a thousand men with his bare hands, so he looked about him for a weapon. One imagines it may have been supplied to him by a contemptuous kick from the foot of an enemy as he rushed upon him. Be that as it may, Samson's eyes lit upon the bleaching bone out of the jaw of an ass lying upturned in its blistered whiteness there under the Syrian sun. No sooner had his eye seen it than his hands seized it, and, laying about him lustily,

he soon faced, not one thousand enemies, but looked down contemptuously upon a thousand corpses.

So it was with a stone out of the brook which lay halfway between the camp of Israel and that of the Philistines, that David slew the giant Goliath. The Son of God was laid in a manger upon His advent into the world. Men had seen the possibilities of a manger for holding the food of their cattle. They had never dreamed it could hold the Son of God. This same matchless man wrought in a carpenter's shop, thereby dignifying the day's labour by which the workingmen of the world earn their bread in the sweat of their faces. There is nothing common save as men hold it common. One night in my city, a woman stood on a street corner and waited seemingly for a passing car, but she did not take the car when it came. Hundreds of people passed her, back and forth, and no one observed the droop of her shoulders, the weariness of her face, the utter dejection of her whole attitude. But there came another woman who had had her eyes opened to the possibilities of divine grace in not only a common, but a soiled, life, and one glance of her eyes revealed to her soul the whole story of her fallen sister. Directly she had come to the woman's side, spoken a quiet word of casual greeting, linked arms with her sister, and had her on the way to a pastor's

home, where, in a quiet hour, through the unfolding of the Word of God, she found life and hope and relief and the new chance which God is ever willing to give.

One may suppose that a thousand boys had seen Benjamin Franklin fly his kite; that, perhaps, hundreds of them together had watched that fascinating flight. But only Franklin found in the kite a key by which to unlock the myriad-volted power of the blue-vaulted heavens.

Isaac Newton was not unlike other men in that he saw apples fall from the limbs of his garden trees. He was forever distinguished from them, however, in what the falling of an apple meant to him, and in what he made it mean to the world of science, and practical business.

Let men be persuaded to open their eyes to the possibilities of glory that always lie around. The epitaph which the centuries wrote upon the tomb of the great King David was this: "He served his generation." They said of Jesus: "He was among men as one who served." His disciples quarrelled for places of pre-eminence, while Jesus prepared to wash their feet. Jesus Himself says that the glory and triumph of heaven may be found in this life upon the path in which walk the hungry, the naked, the friendless.

During one of the battles of the Civil War,

a Confederate drummer boy with a canteen filled with water picked his way back and forth over the silent battlefield whereon lay the dead and dying of both armies. He came to a man who had fallen from loss of blood and excess of pain. Lifting his head, he poured into his lips a few drops of cooling water, bathed his face, and changed his position. In the midst of his ministering the wounded Federal soldier opened his eyes, looked upon the other, and whispered: "The uniform of an enemy, but the heart of a Christian." Commonplace service that, but a glorious service, nevertheless.

The glory of the Juvenile Court of the present day lies simply in the old, old principle of the vicarious atonement wherein the executive assumes the place and responsibility for the criminal. It is strange that more modern-day politicians have not discovered this short path to lasting glory in the application of the commonplace old spiritual truths to practical everyday life.

But if there is a glory in the commonplace, there is also a judgment of the commonplace. Two ministers went into a house of mourning to conduct a funeral service. They went with their judgment already formed that, perhaps, no good thing could be said about the man over whose body they were to speak. But, as they came into the house, a fellow-citizen met them and said: "Two hours before his

sudden death he was in the house of a destitute family, ministering to their wants, tenderly, patiently, and with an abandonment of joy in the service." Then the minister who spoke said: "One never knows how close at hand the borderland of heaven lies to us." For the Master Himself said: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." No service rendered in the name of the Master, even the giving of a cup of cold water in His name, shall go without its reward. One can hardly imagine a sterner tribunal before which he must arraign himself than that of the neglected commonplaces of the daily life. There are all about us hungry bodies, but for every hungry body there is a hungrier soul; for every physical failure there is a greater moral failure.

In the face of our neglect of His commonplaces, how shall we meet God? What of the young men we are not reaching for Christ? What of the girls we are not guarding? What of the stupendous indifference to the concerns and interests of our fellows all about us? How shall we face God with what we are leaving undone? These things that might be so easily done, had we eyes to see them, the hearts to plan for them, and the willing hands to work with them.

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